THE
Duties of the Closet.
BEING.
An Earnest Exhortation
TO
Private Devotion.

A

THE DUTIES OF THE CLOSET.

BEING

An Earneſt Exhortation

TO

Private Devotion.

By Sr. Wm Dawes

St. Matthew 6. 4.

Thy Father which ſeeth in Secret, himſelf ſhall reward thee openly.

LONDON,

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TO

His very much Eſteemed Friend

Mr. *B. C.*

Dear Friend,

I Am very ſure that nothing can be unacceptable to you, which tends to the promoting of Religion, and reviving the decay'd Spirit of Piety. I know with how much Compaſſion and Concern you behold the Prophaneneſs of the preſent Age, how Vigorouſly you oppoſe it, and how Truly and Sincerely you Mourn for it. And therefore I could not tell to whom I ſhould rather dedicate theſe Papers than to you, by whom I know they will be kindly receiv'd, if for no other Reaſon, yet for this, that they were well and honeſtly deſign'd, and aim at a Great and Noble End.

I do not intend to make a long Epiſtle, but only to let you ſee, by theſe few rude Lines, that where-ever I am, or whatever I am doing, you are ſtill in my Thoughts; and more eſpecially then, when I am engag'd in any Religious Work, it being almoſt impoſſible to think of Religion, and not to think of you who are ſo nearly related to her. But I hate any thing that looks like Flattery, eſpecially between Friends, and therefore I ſhall add no more but, what I can add with a great deal of Sincerity, that I wiſh you all the Happineſs both of this and another World, and that I ſhall always rejoyce, when I can meet with an opportunity, of ſhewing you how much I am,

Your faithful Friend,

and humble Servant.

THE

THE PREFACE

TWO things are generally expected from the Author of every Book. First, That he ſhould tell the World why he wrote it; and Secondly how he has wrote it.

I am very ſorry that I am able to give ſo good a reaſon for the Writing of it as I am; and I heartily wiſh there had been no occaſion for it. But the General neglect of Devotion that is too viſible, calls loudly for it, and makes all Apologies for Writing on this Subject needleſs.

When I conſider'd with my ſelf how little Devotion is expreſſed in Publick, where it is Mens Intereſt ſometimes to put on a *form of Godlineſs; I could not help making this unhappy Inference, that there could be ſcarce any left in the Cloſet,*

Closet, where only God and our own Souls see what we do. For how can we imagine that men, who will not vouchsafe to show common Civility to Religion in publick, where it may be for their Interest to do it, should receive her into their retirements, and make her their familiar and bosom Friend? This was a sad and melancholy reflection to me; I was unwilling to believe it, and yet it was too plain to be disbelievʼd. What then should I do? Should I sit still and bewail in private this decay of Piety? Or should I not rather think on some way to revive the Antient Spirit of Devotion, *and to bring Closet Religion into Fashion? This certainly did best become me, and this could be done no other way, than by endeavouring, in a publick writing, to convince the World of the danger they were in, by the neglect of the Closet* Duties, *and consequently of the necessity that lay upon them, if they would get out of their danger, to be more exact and frequent in the performance of them for the future, than they have hitherto been.*

And

And indeed I know nothing more neceſſary, than the keeping up a ſenſe of Cloſet Religion in the World; for if this once fails, ſincerity will ſoon take her leave of us. Publick Religion may be, and I fear often is, onely acted for Worldly Intereſt, and conſiſts in outward Show and Formality. But he that is Religious in his Cloſet, muſt be ſo upon true Principles; for nothing can engage him to be Religious there, but a true ſenſe of his Obligations to ſerve and fear God, not for any Worldly end, but upon a much better account; purely to pleaſe God, and to ſave his own Soul.

Thus much for the Occaſion of Writing this Book. As to the manner of Writing it I have onely this to ſay, that it is written with all the plainneſs and ſimplicity imaginable, and with as much brevity, as a diſcourſe of this Nature would bear.

One thing more I deſire the Reader to take notice of, and that is, that I deſign'd not this Book for the ordinary People, but for thoſe who are in ſome meaſure Maſters of their own Time, and there-

therefore I have preſcrib'd much longer Devotions, than are ſuitable to the condition of Labouring People.

I heartily and earneſtly beſeech God, ſuch as it is, to proſper it, and to grant that it may have that Effect which it aims at, the making men truly Pious and Religious.

THE

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ERRATA.

PAge 5. line 21. read *grudge*. l. 22. r. *freely*. p. 6. l. 17. r. *earthly*. p. 13. l. 11. r. *opportunity*. p. 16. l. 26. r. *perform*.

THE INTRODUCTION.

SHEWING

The Obligations we lie under Frequently to Retire into our Cloſets, and the Duties There to be performed by us.

IT being in vain to talk to Men of the Duties of the Cloſet, till they are thoroughly perſwaded that there are ſuch Duties; I think it abſolutely neceſſary, before I proceed any farther, to ſhow the indiſpenſable Obligations we lie under, frequently to retire into our Cloſets; and having taken our Leaves of the World for a time, wholly to apply our ſelves to ſuch Acts of Religion as I ſhall hereafter direct men to, as moſt proper for that place.

And for the doing of this, methinks it ſhould be ſufficient onely to put men in mind that they are Chriſtians; and, as ſuch, are oblig'd, even whilſt they live here upon Earth, *to have their Converſation in Heaven.* So that if Men would but ſeriouſly endeavour to become Chriſtians in good earneſt, if they would reſolve *to walk as becomes the Goſpel of Chriſt*, they would ſoon ſee the neceſſity of retirement in their Chriſtian Converſation. For alas! how is it poſſible to hold Converſation with God and the World together? *Know ye not*, as St. *James* ſaith, 4. 4. *that the friendſhip of the world is enmity with God?* If therefore we deſire to become Friends of God, if we would enjoy his Converſation, it muſt be in our Cloſets; where, when we have ſhut out his irreconcilable Enemy the World, he will moſt freely communicate himſelf to us.

But, becauſe we find by ſad experience that all the Arguments we can heap together are ſcarce ſufficient to keep men firm and ſtedfaſt in their duties, I ſhall not reſt ſatisfi'd with what I have ſaid, but proceed to ſhow the neceſſity of Cloſet-retirement from theſe following Conſiderations.

Firſt, from the nature of ſeveral Chriſtian duties, which can be perform'd no where but in our Cloſets, ſo that we muſt either be con-

contented to leave them wholly unperfom'd, or else own the absolute necessity of retiring into our Closets, where alone we can discharge our selves of them.

Of this nature, are Reading the Scriptures, Self-examination, and Divine Meditation.

First, Reading the Scriptures, a Duty so absolutely necessary, that, without it, it is impossible to know what the Duties of a Christian are. For in these are the conditions of our Eternal happiness contained, and if we do not take care to acquaint our selves well with them, we shall never be able to perform, themas we ought to do.

And in what place, I beseech ye, shall we read these holy Oracles, upon which the eternal Salvation of our Souls and bodies depends? Shall we satisfie our selves with looking them over in a crowd, and in Company? If so, I think we show very little concern for our immortal Souls, and the affairs of another world, little indeed, even less than we express for the trifling affairs of this life. For where shall we find a considering man that will content himself with a slight view of any Deed or Writing, upon which his whole Estate depends? Will not men in this case withdraw themselves from Company, and with the greatest care and attention imaginable overlook their Writings and weigh every word they read, for fear

they ſhould commit any overſight or miſtake? And is the Soul then of leſs value than the body, or is our eternal inheritance in the Heavens leſs worth looking after than the poor ſhort-liv'd riches of this world? No certainly: We can never read that Book, in which are contain'd the conditions of immortal life, with care and attention enough. We can never need ſo much to be void of diſturbance and diſtraction, as when we are going to acquaint our ſelves with the narrow way that leads to everlaſting happineſs, and to learn how we may avoid that broad and well-beaten way which leads to everlaſting ruine and deſtruction. No miſtake can be of like fatal conſequence with a miſtake in this point, and therefore now, if ever, ought we to free our ſelves from all worldly incumbrances, and to withdraw into ſome private place, where, with undiſturb'd and watchful thoughts, we may peruſe this important book of life and death.

Secondly, Another Duty proper to the Cloſet is Self-examination A duty of that great uſefulneſs to Chriſtians, in order to the managing their converſation aright, that, had we no expreſs command of God for the performance of it, as we have. 2 *Cor.* 13. *c. v.* 5. yet our own reaſon would oblige us to it.

And this can no where be perform'd but in

in our Closets. For it requires the greatest attention of mind, the greatest seriousness and fixedness of thought, that we can possibly attain to. It is a stating of Accompts between God and our own Souls; and if thro' carelessness we happen to commit a mistake in this our reckoning, the consequence of such a mistake may perchance be no less than the eternal ruine of our Souls and bodies. When therefore we set about this weighty work, we ought to bid adieu to all worldly cares and perplexities, to free our thoughts from all business of this life, and wholly to apply our selves to this great affair. And this is no more than what we our selves own to be necessary, by our constant proceedings in our worldly concerns. The Merchant, when he has a mind to settle his Accompts, shuts himself up close, and will not be disturb'd upon any account whatsoever. And shall we then grude to bestow that care upon our Souls, which we so free-undertake for our bodies? Shall our paltry Accompts of this life, wherein a mistake is of no great consequence, make us call together all our care and attention, and sequester our selves from noise and company, till our business is finish'd? and shall we think it hard to spend a little time in private, in stating this grand Accompt between God and our own Souls? No surely: If we have

any reason in us, as we pretend to have, we shall never dispute it. But, whither we dispute it or no, it is most certainly our duty frequently thus to examine our selves with the greatest strickness and exactness imaginable, and consequently it is our Duty frequently to retire into our Closets, where alone we can be at leisure to attend this weighty work without distraction.

The Third and last Duty I mentioned, as proper to the Closet, was Divine Meditation, or the Contemplation of God and Divine objects, which is a very considerable part of that Heavenly Conversation which Christians are oblig'd to.

And now certainly men ought to shake off all earthy filth and dross, when their Souls are preparing to mount to Heaven; for these will hinder and retard their ascent at least, they will make their motion less brisk and lively; nay perhaps they will be such a dead weight upon the Soul, as to keep it from ascending at all towards Heaven. When therefore we would set apart any time for this Duty, we must, as it were, go out of this lower world, that is, we must, for a time, free our selves, as much as we can, from the thoughts of this world or any thing belonging to it. And the only way to do this, is to retire into some private place, where there shall be no variety of worldly objects

objects to divert and distract our affections, but our thoughts shall be free and disengag'd, and fully and entirely fixed upon the glorious objects of Heaven. Solitude is a very great friend to Devotion, for it takes our minds off from those mean objects, which the affairs of the world generally present to us, and makes them fit to soar aloft, and to contemplate such objects as are much more noble, and more agreeable to our rational faculties. But the world is an utter enemy to any thing that is good, it ties our thoughts and affections fast to it self, and it is in vain to think of Heaven without renouncing Earth. Adieu therefore thou perpetual enemy of all Christian Duties, but more especially of Religious Meditation. Behold! I leave and forsake thee, that I may cleave entirely to my God; that my thoughts and affections may follow him alone, and that I may feast my self with the sweet and comfortable contemplation of Him, and his Glories.

Thus must every Christian say, who intends to perform the Duties I have been treating of. For they all require great care and thoughtfulness, and therefore are only fit works for that place, where men usually, that ever consider, call their thoughts together, I mean the Closet.

But, besides the Duties just mention'd, which are proper onely to the Closet, there are others both Publick and Private: That is, such as are to be perform'd by us, both publickly in our Churches and Families, and privately in our Closets too.

Of this sort are Confession of Sins, Prayer, Thanksgiving, and Humiliation, or Mourning, both for our own and other mens Sins. These are by all allow'd to be Duties of the Church and Family; and I make no doubt but that they will appear to be Duties of the Closet too, to all who give themselves leave to consider what follows.

First, That every man has particular Sins to confess, particular Blessings to ask, particular Mercies to give thanks for, and particular Failings both of his own and other mens to bewail; which there neither ought to be, nor indeed can there be, any provision made for in the Devotions of the Church or Family.

There ought to be no provision for them, because, if it could be, it would be a thing of very ill consequence. It would oblige us to reveal all, even our most hidden faults, to the world; to publish all our wants and necessities, of what nature or kind soever; to make known to every body who were the greatest

greateſt Favourites of Heaven, and received the largeſt gifts from God; which, to ſay no more of it, would be very inconvenient.

But, beſides the inconvenience, it is a thing impracticable. For it is impoſſible to make any publick Form of Prayer, which ſhall ſuit all mens particular and private occaſions. And therefore our Publick Confeſſions, Prayers, Thankſgivings and Humiliations, all run in General Terms, which are ſuitable to the common Conditions of Men, but will not anſwer all their private occaſions. Every day almoſt brings ſome new unforeſeen accident upon us, which could not poſſibly be provided for in our Publick Devotions. And, beſides, the particular and Caſual wants of Men, and their particular Sins and Mercies, are ſo numerous and various, that, were it poſſible to reckon them up, and to digeſt them under proper Heads, and inſert them into our Publick Devotions, it would make them endleſs.

The Cloſet therefore is the proper Place for theſe Duties. Here every private Man has time enough for this work, and may do it without the leaſt inconvenience. Here he may ſafely acknowledge his moſt ſecret Sins, and not ſuffer in his reputation by this his acknowledgment. Here he need not be aſhamed to own all his wants and neceſſities

and to ask a supply for them. Here he may freely return thanks to God for all his Mercies, without being envy'd for them. Lastly, here he may pour out his Soul in Tears and Lamentations for his own and other mens sins, and need not fear being derided for them.

But, that these are Duties of the Closet, as well as of the Church and Family, will appear farther.

Secondly, From the Practice of inspir'd Men of old, who constantly performed these Duties in Private as well as in Publick. Thus we may find *Daniel* making a Confession of his sins in Private. *Dan.* 9. Thus *David*, *Daniel*, St. *Peter*, St. *Paul*, nay and our Blessed Saviour himself too, offer'd up their Petitions to God in Private, as we may read, *Psalm* 55. 17. *Dan* 6. 10. *Acts* 10. 9. 1 *Cor.* 22.8. *Ephes.* 1. 16. *Matthew* 14. 23. Thus are we told that *Daniel gave thanks to his God in his Chamber three times a day*, Dan. 6. 10. And thus did the Soul of pious *Jeremiah* weep in secret places for the Sins of his People, as we may read *Jerem.* the 13. 17. So that, if any Argument may be drawn, for the practice of any Duty, from the examples of Men (as certainly from those of inspir'd Men, who were immediatly directed by Gods Holy Spirit, there justly may) we have here a plain and cogent Argument, for the performance of these Duties

ties in Private, taken not only from the examples of good Men, but of Men inſpir'd, nay of Chriſt himſelf who was God as well as Man.

Thirdly, we have the expreſs command of God for the performance of ſome of theſe Duties in Private. And therefore, were there no other obligation, this would be ſufficient. Thus Mat. 6.6. *But thou, when thou prayeſt, enter into thy Cloſet, and when thou haſt ſhut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in ſecret.* Where the word *Pray* is to be taken in it's largeſt Senſe, as comprehending Confeſſion and Thankſgiving. For theſe being the conſtant Companions of our Prayer (though they are not, properly ſpeaking, parts of it, the word Prayer ſignifying only a Petition or Requeſt,) it is very uſual both in Scripture, and in the writings of Holy men, to conclude both theſe under the name of Prayer. Again, 1 Tim. 2. 8. *I will therefore that men pray every where*; not only in the Church, and in their Families, but in their Cloſets alſo.

The Summ of what I have ſaid is this; That there are ſeveral Religious Duties which can be perform'd no where but in our Cloſets; that there are others, which are indeed to be perform'd elſewhere, but muſt be performed there alſo; as we learn, from reaſon, the examples of Holy men, and the commands of God himſelf. From

From hence I conclude that it is absolutely necessary for every Man to set apart some time for the Worship of God in Private, where he may be at leisure to perform the abovemention'd Duties.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Shewing how we ought to behave our ſelves, at our firſt coming into our Cloſets.

HAving brought you to your Cloſet, I think it neceſſary to inſtruct you, how you may behave your Self in it ſo, as to be the better for coming into it. And, for this end, I would adviſe you, before you apply your Self to any particular Duty, to reflect ſeriouſly upon theſe following Conſiderations.

Firſt, how inexcuſable all wandering thoughts will be in this Place. The deſign of your coming hither is, to gain an oppurtunity of waiting upon God without diſtraction. For this Reaſon, you have left your buſineſs, forſaken your Company, and withdrawn your Self from the world. You have now no variety of earthly objects to divert your thoughts from Heaven; you are ſhut up from all the Charms and Temptations of this World, and may be as intent upon the affairs

affairs of another World as you pleaſe. Tis true, your mind may go out of the Cloſet, and you may, even when you are there, be as deeply immers'd in Worldly and ſenſual thoughts, as when you are in the midſt of Company. But it muſt be your own Fault, if you are ſo. In our Publick Devotionswe may meet with many accidental diverſions, occaſion'd by the great variety of outward Objects that ſurround us; but we cannot plead this in our Retirements. If we keep our minds within our Cloſets, we ſhall find it an eaſie matter to fix them upon ſuch Objects as are proper for thoſe Places; and if we let them go out of them, and ramble about the World, it is not for want of power and opportunity, but want of will and endeavour, to reſtrain them. Reſolve therefore with thy Self to ſet a watch upon thy Thoughts, and to make advantage of thy Retirement, by ſending up thy Mind, which may now eaſily diſengage it ſelf from Earth, to Heaven. Aſſure thy Self, that God will moſt ſeverely puniſh thee, if thou neglecteſt this opportunity of ſerving him with free and undiſtracted Thoughts, and therefore do not preſume to let the World have any part of thy Soul, but give it whole and entire to him.

Secondly, Conſider how little all Hypocricy and inſincerity will a vail thee here.

To

To call upon God with our lips, while our hearts are far from him, may do us some Service before Men, who cannot see into our hearts; it may make us appear better to them than indeed we are, and so may be of advantage to us: But to dissemble where no body sees us but God, *who tryeth the heart and reins, and understandeth our thoughts afar off*, is an Argument of egregious folly, and of great impudence. Men may possibly think it worth their while, to put on a Form of Godliness in their Publick Devotions, that by it they may obtain a good reputation among Men, who can judge only by outward appearance: But in the Closet, where God only sees us, we can have no Temptation to it. Nay we have great Reason to avoid insincerity here, because all our time and pains will be lost, if we only employ our Selves in a Superficial Devotion. And it will be much better for us never to pretend to worship God in our Closets, than to deceive our Selves with a cold and careless, an external and heartless worshipping of him. Let thy Lips therefore and thy Heart go together, that so thou may'st reap some advantage from thy Devotions, by ingratiating thy Self with God, who loves all such as Serve him in Truth and Sincerity.

Thirdly and Lastly, look upon thy Closet no more as an ordinary Room, but as the Temple

Temple of God; where he will be in a peculiar manner preſent, and take eſpecial notice of all thy actions. And let this Conſideration ſink ſo deep into thy mind, that it may make thee fearful of doing any thing that is trifling or fooliſh, while you are engag'd in the Service of God. Let a decent Reverence appear in all thy actions, ſuch as thou would'ſt ſhow, if thou could'ſt ſee God face to face. For tho' he does not viſibly appear to thee, yet he is nigh, very nigh unto thee, and takes a more than ordinary Notice of thy behaviour at this time.

Theſe things I thought neceſſary to premiſe, that Men might know the particular Obligations they lye under to Heavenly-mindedneſs, Sincerity and a reverent awe of God, in their Private Devotions. If they carry not theſe along with them, through all their Duties, they cannot perform them acceptably; and therefore it behoves them earneſtly to endeavour to put on theſe gracious diſpoſitions of mind, before they proceed to the Practice of particular Duties. And, that they may obtain theſe, and ſo per-their Duties, as they ought to do; it will be very proper for them to beg Gods aſſiſtance in this, or ſome ſuch Form of Prayer.

A Pray-

A Prayer.

O Holy and ever bleſſed Lord God, who haſt commanded me to wait upon thee in ſecret, Grant that I may behave my Self ſo in thy preſence, that thou, who ſeeſt in ſecret, may'ſt vouchſafe to reward me openly. Take from me, O Lord, all worldly thoughts, and give me Grace ſo to ſet my affections on thee and all things above, that none of the Charms or Temptations of this World may be able to draw them down from thee. Enſpirit and enliven my earthy droſſy heart, that it may freely mount towards thee; and that I may apply my ſelf to thee, with ſuch a fixedneſs and Attention of Mind, as no wandering Thoughts may interrupt. Make me ſincere in all my Duties, and let me not deceive my own Soul, for thou O Lord canſt not be deceiv'd, with a ſlight and careleſs, a formal and lifeleſs performance of them. Thou requireſt Truth in the inward parts: O purge from me all Hypocriſie and inſincerity. Lord Grant I may make my approaches to thee, with a reverence ſome way anſwerable to thy awful Majeſty, and that, while I am in thy preſence, I may do nothing which may Diſhonour thee, or wound my own Soul. Bleſs me, O Lord, I pray thee, in this Holy exerciſe which I am now beginning,

Grant

Grant that it may be a means of improving me in all Piety, and Holiness and Virtue. Forgive all my frailties and imperfections, and be not strict to mark what I shall do amiss; but deal with me according to thy mercy and loving kindness, and accept of my imperfect Service, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Blessed Lord and Saviour.

Having thus beg'd Gods assistance by Prayer, we may now, with some Confidence apply our selves to our particular Duties, in such order and Method as I shall treat of them. And we need not doubt but that, if we are careful in the performance of our work, God will bestow his blessing upon it, and prosper it.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Of Reading the Holy Scriptures.

THe first Duty we must apply our Selves to, is Reading the Holy Scriptures. For this is the ground Work and Foundation of all our other Duties. The first thing we are to do, is to learn the Will of God, and the next to perfom it.

And, that we may reap that benefit and advantage from them, which may justly be expected; let us take these following Instructions along with us.

Before we set our Selves to Reading, let us consider what it is we are a going to Read; and this is no less than the Word of God himself, nay farther, it is the Word of eternal Life.

As it is the Word of God, it challengeth all Reverence and Respect at our hands. The Majesty of him who speaks is so great, that we cannot hear his words without the greatest awe imaginable. Behold! it is He speaks, *who Created us by the breath of his mouth, and sustains us by the word of his Power.*

Power. It is he, *whose Voice can shake the Mountains*, and make the whole Earth to tremble; he, who is God over all, and gives Laws to the whole World, speaks now to us with an Audible voice; and therefore certainly it becomes us to hear what he saith with Reverence. We dare not surely Scoff at and deride his Words, who can in a moment turn us into Hell for doing so? we dare not presume lightly to esteem his Words, who is a God jealous of his Honour, and will revenge all Affronts offer'd to him, even to the Third and Fourth Generation. No, we will receive them with such a respect, as it becomes a poor, vile, dependent Creature to show to his Creatour, preserver and Lawgiver.

Secondly, Since it is Gods Word, it deserves to be read by us with the greatest Care and Attention possible. When God speaks, it is certainly worth our while to hearken to him; for, whatever infinite Wisdom can say, must needs be of great use to Man. *Hearken therefore unto the word of the Lord, and incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart unto understanding.* Resolve before thou readest, heedfully to mind what thou readest, or else it will be better for thee not to read at all.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, All Gods Words muſt be believ d Whatſoever comes from him muſt be true; For he is Truth it ſelf and cannot lye. He cannot be deceived by others, neither can he himſelf deceive any man; and therefore we may firmly depend upon whatever he ſaith, as infallibly true. *Thy word is true from the beginning*, ſaith *David*; and, *He that ſent me is true*, ſaith our Bleſſed Saviour. *God is not a man that he ſhould lye*, ſaith *Moſes*; Nay, *God cannot lye*, ſaith St. *Paul*. He cannot be deceived, becauſe he is Omniſcient, and knoweth all things; nor can he deceive, becauſe he *is* Truth it ſelf, and it is impoſſible for him to lye. Prepare thy Soul therefore to receive whatever he ſaith, with a firm and unſhaken belief. Remember that it is God who ſpeaks, even *the God of Truth*, and make no doubt of believing his Words. Thou canſt not offer a greater affront unto him than to diſ-believe him; for this is to call him a lyar. And therefore it will be leſs excuſable for thee never to look into the Scriptures, than, when thou knoweſt them to be the Word of God, to read them conſtantly, without a ſteady Faith in them.

Fourthly, Whatever God ſaith muſt be obeyed by us. God is the Sovereign Lawgiver of the World, and may impoſe any Laws,

Laws upon us his Creatures, that he pleaſeth. And therefore, when he ſpeaks, his Word muſt be a Law to us. *The Lord is our Law giver*, ſaith *Iſaiah*. He is that *one Law-giver who is able to ſave and to deſtroy; Obey his Voice therefore, and provoke him not.* As *Moſes* ſaid to the Children of *Iſrael*. The Scriptures contain the Laws of God *written with his own finger*, and he who reads them, and obeyeth them not, *is a tranſgreſſour of the Law, and ſhall periſh.* Beware therefore of doing this. For it will be much better for you never to read a line of Scripture, than to read it frequently and not obey it. For to ſin againſt a clear light, which we have conſtantly in our eye, is the greateſt aggravation ſin is capable of. Make this reſolution therefore with thy Self, before thou readeſt, that thou wilt ſincerely Practice what thou readeſt.

Again, As the Scriptures are the Word of eternal Life, that is, as they offer us Conditions, which if we perform, we ſhall moſt certainly obtain Eternal Life; they lay a freſh Obligation upon us to receive them with Reverence, Attention, Faith and Obedience. For what Gift ſhall we receive with Reverence and Reſpect, if not the Gift of Everlaſting Happineſs? what words ſhall we liſten to, if not the words of Eternal Life? Where ſhall we ſhow

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our readineſs to believe, if we are ſlow to believe the greateſt and moſt welcome News that ever man heard? Laſtly, what commands ſhall we be willing to obey, if not thoſe, which will reward our obedience with an Eternity of Happineſs?

That therefore thou may'ſt read the Scriptures, and be the better for them; nay, that thou may'ſt not be infinitely the worſe for reading them; it will be neceſſary for thee, before thou ventureſt to open theſe Holy Books, to reſolve that thou wilt peruſe them with a moſt profound Reverence and Reſpect; that thou wilt liſten to them with a moſt wakeful Attention, aſſent to them with an unfeigned Faith, and obey them with a Sincere and ready Submiſſion.

Having put on theſe holy Reſolutions, thou haſt now nothing elſe to do, before thou ſetteſt thy Self to reading, but to beg the aſſiſtance of Gods Spirt, which alone can ſtrengthen theſe thy Reſolutions, and inſtruct thee in the things that are of God, in theſe words of our Church.

Bleſſed Lord, who haſt cauſed all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, Grant that I may in ſuch wiſe read, mark, and inwardly digeſt them, that by patience and comfort of thy Holy word, I may embrace and ever hold faſt the bleſſed hope of everlaſting life, which thou haſt given us in our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.

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And now you may safely venture to unfold these Sacred Books, and look into them; and need not fear not being benefited by them, if in your reading of them, you are careful to observe these following Rules.

First, To chuse for your Reading such Portions of them as are most plain and intelligible, and relate most immediately to your Duty. Such as are in the old Testament.

The whole Book of *Genesis*, which gives you an account of the Creation of all things by God, and of your Self out of the dust, and of the fall of Man; which will tend mightily to establish Religion and Humility in your Soul. You have here also great instances of Gods displeasure and severity against Sin, such as were that of the destruction of *Sodom* and *Gomorah* by Fire and Brimstone, and of the whole World by a deluge of Waters. Here are great Examples of Piety, and Faith in God, set before us, such as were those of *Enoch*, *Noah*, *Abraham*, *Joseph*, *&c.* In a word, you will here meet with great incouragements to Piety and Virtue, from the Consideration of the specialcare God took of his Servants, *Noah*, *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob*, and *Joseph*. But, what is above all, you have here very pregnant promises of the Messiah, who should bless all Nations

Nations of the World by his coming.

Some parts alſo of the Book of *Exodus* muſt not be omitted. *Viz.* thoſe which give us an account of the Birth and Wonderful Preſervation of *Moſes*, of God's Miraculous Protections and Deliverance of his People from *Pharaoh*, and of the Moral Laws Eſtabliſhed among the *Iſraelites*. Other parts of this Book, which relate to the Judicial or Ceremonial Laws, though they are of great uſe for ſome ends, yet I think they are not ſo fit to be read by the Common ſort of Chriſtians, as other more practical parts of Scripture. *Leviticus* chiefly treats of the Ceremonial Law, and therefore is not very proper for the reading of ordinary Chriſtians. There are indeed many good Precepts in it, but thoſe which relate to us, we ſhall meet with in many other parts of the Bible. The ſame may be ſaid of *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*. I would by no means have it thought that I judge theſe Books not to be worth our Reading; no, I am far from entertaining any ſuch Prophane Thought. Our Church has taken care that they ſhall be read to us in her Publick Service, where it is our Duty to hearken attentively to them. My deſire only is, that Private Chriſtians, may read thoſe parts of Scripture chiefly in their Cloſets, which will moſt tend to better their Lives and Converſations,

ſations, and to confirm and ſettle them in the practice of Religious Duties.

The Books from *Deuteronomy* to *Job* are chiefly Hiſtorical, and though there are many occurrences in them worth our Notice, yet I think there are ſeveral Books in the Old Teſtament, by the reading of which we may much more improve our ſelves in Holineſs and Vertue. Such are the Book of *Job*, the *Pſalms*, the *Proverbs*, and *Eccleſiaſtes*.

The Book of *Job*, from the beginning to the end of it, ſets before us ſuch an Example of Reſignation to God's Will, Patience, and Contentedneſs under the greateſt Sufferings, of an unſhaken Faith and Piety, and an Unblemiſhed Integrity; as moſt highly deſerves our Imitation. But this is not all; it gives us an admirable account of the reaſon and Principles of all theſe Duties, and in every Line has ſomething that is uſeful and inſtructive.

The Book of *Pſalms* is the beſt Book of Devotions in the World; it is almoſt wholly compos'd of Confeſſions, Prayers, Thankſgivings and Meditations; and it has ſuch a Strange Power to cure heavineſs, to extirpate grief, to lay aſleep troubleſome thoughts and paſſions, to eaſe us of our cares, to recreate thoſe who are oppreſſed with pain, to move compunction for Sin, and to promote

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fervent and affectionate Piety; that no Book in the World is to be compared with it for these purposes.

The Book of *Proverbs* was written by *Solomon*, the wisest of Men; and contains in it so many admirable Instructions and Exhortations to all sorts of Vertue and true Wisdom, as make it exceeding useful; and plainly show that it came from the Spirit of Wisdom.

The Book of *Ecclesiastes* gives us *Solomons* Judgment of Worldly things, after he had tryed them all. And certainly it must be very valuable to know his Opinion of them, who not only by reason of his Wisdom was best able to judge of them, but by reason of the affluence and plenty he enjoy'd of them, could give a better account of them, than any other Man under the Sun.

These Books therefore I would have thee take often into thy hands, being well assured that they are full of good and extraordinary useful matter.

The rest of the Books of the Old Testament are chiefly Historical and Prophetical; and upon that account, are neither so intelligible, nor instructive as the Books abovementioned.

In the New Testament we must omit no Book, but that of the *Revelations*, which being extremely difficult to be understood,

even by Men of great Skill and Learning, cannot possibly be proper for Unlearned Christians.

Thus much I thought necessary to say, to let you know in what parts of Scripture you may best employ your time. I would not have you slight the other parts, because they are less useful; they have all their uses, and those very great ones too; and though to thee, who hast neither Time nor Learning to search into the bottom of them, they may seem of little use; yet assure thy self they are not so. They are all the words of that God, who never speaks in vain, and therefore though thou can'st not discover their great usefulness, yet they certainly have it.

Secondly, In your reading, make use of some plain Commentator to instruct you in the true Sense and Meaning of the words, and to show you the Connexion of them. The five Books of *Moses* were lately put out by the Reverend Dr. *Kidder* Bishop of *Bath* and *Wells*, with such a plain and familiar Paraphrase upon the Text, as will help us to understand it with ease. The Book of *Job*, the *Psalms*, the *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiastes* have been some time extant, with such a Paraphrase of the Reverend Dr. *Patrick*'s Bishop of *Ely*, as all Men justly admire for its clearness and conciseness. The best Paraphrase we

we have upon the New Testament written in our own Tongue, is that of the Learned Dr. *Hammond*. These are the only Books I can advise Unlearned Readers to, and these will be great helps to them.

Thirdly, Consider that the end of your reading the Scriptures is, *That you may know what you must do to be saved.* And therefore trouble not your head with little impertinent disputes about passages of Scripture that relate not at all to this important Question. All things necessary to be believed or done by you in order to your Salvation, are set down in plain and legible Characters; mind these, and read them over and over. But, if thou meet'st with difficulties in other places of Scripture, which do not so nearly concern thee, be not disquieted at them. He who finds enough in the Scriptures to carry him to Heaven, has answered the end of his reading them, and need not rack his Brain to solve those difficulties, which will do him no Service when unfolded.

Fourthly, Have a care of perverting the sense of the words, to make them serve any Opinion or Practise thou hast a kindness for. St. *Peter* complain'd in his time, *That there were unlearned Men who wrested the Scriptures to their own destruction*, *i. e.* who abused and perverted the sense of them, and thereby deceiv'd themselves, and became

lyable to destructions; as we also shall, if we endeavour to corrupt the Scriptures. Alwayes remember, that we are first to enquire into the Sense of the Scripture, and then to make our Opinions and Practises conformable to it; and that we are not to resolve first what we will think or do, and then force the Scripture, right or wrong, to countenance our Opinions and Practises.

Fifthly, Never allow that to be the Sense of any disputable passage in Scripture, which contradicts any other plain passage of it. For God cannot contradict himself; and therefore when thou seest any Interpretation put upon his words, which is directly contrary to some plain words of his in another place, be sure to reject it. For, whatever the meaning of the words may be, it is certain this it cannot be.

Sixthly, Above all things let us beware of being conceited of our own Understandings. Nothing will hinder us so much from learning the true sense and meaning of Scripture, as Pride and Self conceit. For *God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble*. And therefore let us take heed of being Positive and Dogmatical, and wedded to our own Opinions. Let us desire to be instructed by others, and let us humbly beg of God that he would lead us into all Truth; for this is the most likely way to come to the Knowledge of the Truth. *Lastly*,

Lastly, Let us take care to be frequent in this Duty. The best way to understand the Scriptures, is to read them frequently; for, when we are well acquainted with them, one place will help us to interpret another. It is impossible, in this case, to prescribe a certain rule for all Men; their Circumstances being vastly different and unlike. But I would have no Man, who is Master of his own time, ever pass a day without reading some part of them; nay, I would have every such Man read them constantly when he retires to his Morning and Evening Devotions.

If we perform this Duty, according to the above-mentioned Rules, the Benefits, that will redound to us from it, will be unspeakable. For,

First, We shall hereby keep our selves in a constant Knowledge and Remembrance of our Duty. We are very apt, through a forgetfulness of God's Commands, to commit very many and great mistakes. And therefore we are often call'd upon to *take heed lest we forget the Covenant of the Lord our God.* If then we have a mind to resolve, with Holy *David*, *That we will never forget the precepts of God*; we must very often look into them, and by so doing, we shall

alwayes keep up the remembrance of them freſh and lively in our minds.

Secondly, We ſhall in the Scriptures find many Powerful Motives and Encouragements to keep our ſelves ſtedfaſt in the Practiſe of our Duty. While with an Eye of Faith we look upon the great Rewards, that are every where promis'd in Scripture to God's Obedient Children, we ſhall never need any other Arguments to provoke us to well-doing. For if the hopes of everlaſting Life and Glory will not Infuſe Strength and Vigour into us, and make us go on confidently and chearfully in the Practiſe of our Duty; I am ſure, no meaner conſideration will have any effect upon us. Again, if the Dreadful Threatnings denounc'd there, almoſt in every page, againſt Sin and Diſobedience, will not be able to deter us from them, no fear of leſſer Puniſhments certainly will work upon us. Here alone have we ſuch charming Invitations to Obedience, and ſuch ſtrong Arguments againſt Sin, as no other Book in the World can furniſh us with.

Thirdly, Theſe Holy Books will be great helps to us in our Devotions, not only as they ſet before us the Examples of Devout Men, but alſo as they are a Rich Magazine of

of ſuch Expreſſions as we ſhall have frequent occaſion to uſe in our Confeſſions, Prayers and Thankſgivings to God. No Men can pretend that they can Praiſe God, and pray to him, in ſuch an agreeable manner, as thoſe Holy Men did, who were inſpir'd by the Spirit of God himſelf; and therefore their Prayers and Hymns of Praiſe, their Confeſſions and Thankſgivings, are very proper Patterns for us at all times to imitate, and ſometimes wholly to Tranſcribe.

Laſtly, They will give us certain Eaſe and Comfort under all the Preſſures and Afflictions of this Life. *Come hither all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and ye ſhall here find reſt unto your ſouls.* Come hither all ye that are oppreſſed with the Cares and Troubles of this World, nay perhaps overwhelm'd with the Injuries of it. Here you ſhall find one that will eaſe you of your Cares and Troubles, and defend you from the Affronts and Wrongs of a Wicked and Malitious World; *Let not your hearts faint therefore, fear not and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified; For the Lord your God is he that goeth with you.* This is the Language of thoſe Sacred Books; this is that comfortable Language which will raiſe our Drooping Spirits, and adminiſter ſure Comfort unto us under our moſt heavy

Afflictions. Read once again, and thou shalt there find, *That these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work for thee a far greater and eternal weight of Glory.* And now surely thou mayest not only bear thy Afflictions with Patience, but may'st Triumph and Glory in them. When thy God, the God of Truth calls to thee, and bids thee look up to Heaven and see a Bright Crown there prepar'd for thee; if thou beareſt thy Afflictions with Patience, surely thou can'st not forbear *rejoycing in tribulation*; at least thou need'st not fear fainting, while thou keepest that Glorious and never-fading Crown in thy View.

Of Reading other Good BOOKS.

BEfore I conclude this Chapter, I think it will be convenient to say something concerning our Reading other good Books besides the Scripture. And this I will do in few words, by advising you what Books will be most proper for your Reading, and by Instructing you how you ought to Read them.

The Books most worthy our Reading, next to the Canonical Books of Scripture, which

which alone are to be counted the Word of God, are the *Apocryphal* Books which are bound up at the end of your Bibles. These the Church doth order, *Artic.* 6. *To be read for Example of Life and Instruction of Manners*; and indeed they are very well stored both with Precepts and Examples fit for this purpose.

Especially the Books of *Wisdom* and *Ecclesiasticus* I would have thee take frequently into thy hands, for they are full of Excellent, I had almost said Divine, Wisdom; and will be of use to thee in all States and Conditions of Life whatsoever.

The Story of the *Maccabees* is a Noble Story, and richly deserves to be read, with care and attention, by us. The others have their several good uses; but these, which I have mention'd in particular are most worthy thy frequent perusal.

Few Books joyn'd to these, will be sufficient. *The Whole Duty of Man*, *Dr.* Hammond's *Practical Catechisme*; *Dr.* Patrick's *Mensa Mystica*, *His Book of Prayers*; and *Dr.* Sherlock's Two Excellent Treatises on *Death and Judgment* will make a Library large enough for any ordinary Christian. If you have time enough to read more, you may consult your Spiritual Pastour, and there is no doubt but he will direct you to such, as are most proper for you.

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In Reading of these Books, or any other of this Nature, observe these following Rules.

First, Consider that they are wrote by Men, and therefore do not wonder if thou findest Errors and Mistakes in them. The Authors of them may be very Extraordinary Men, but are not Infallible. And therefore we must not Read these with the same Faith and Confidence, that we do the Holy Scriptures, which were written by God, who neither can be deceived or deceive.

Secondly, Read them without prejudice; let not the Man who wrote them, or some particular passage in them, give thee a distaste of the whole. Remember that thou art not to Read the Man, but his Book; and if that be for thy use, it matters not who was the Author of it. Remember again, that it is not agreeable to the Rules of Wisdom to dislike a whole Book, for the sake of one or two, as we think, indecent or unwary Expressions in it. If the main of it be good, it will become us rather to overlook a few faults, if there be any such in it, than to reject the whole for the sake of these few blemishes. No Man would throw away a piece of Gold, because it has an allay of some

ſome baſer Metal mixt with it. No, he will carefully ſeparate the fine Gold, which is for his uſe, from the droſſy and baſer Particles which accompany it, and make his advantage of it.

Thirdly, Always remember to give thy aſſent to them only ſo far as they agree with the Word of God. The deſign of Writing good Books is to explain the Word of God, and to enforce the Precepts by that enjoyn'd us. But, if Men go about to ſet up their own Traditions for God's Word, we muſt reject them with Scorn and Contempt. God certainly is more worthy of Belief than Man, and whoever offers to contradict him, deſerves to be cenſured by us, as a Deceiver, but not receiv'd, as a Prophet. God's Book is a perfect Book, and whoever offers to add to it, or diminiſh from it, ought to be look't upon as an Impudent Prophane Wretch, who thinks himſelf wiſer than God.

Fourthly and *Laſtly*, Let us Read them with Attention, and a Deſire to Improve our ſelves by them. The End of Reading is to Inform and Inſtruct our ſelves by what we read. And therefore we had better let Reading quite alone, than offer to Read without Attention. He only reads to purpoſe,

poſe, who diligently laying up in his Mind what he Reads, ſhows forth the Fruit of it in his Life and Converſation. Let this then be the end of all our Reading, and let us ſhow that we minded what we Read by Practiſing it.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Of Self-Examination.

AFter we have been taking a view of our Duty, in the Holy Scriptures and other good Books, it will be very proper for us to proceed to an examination of our ſelves.

To examine our ſelves is, to take a ſerious and exact review of our paſt thoughts, words and actions, and to try whither they have been ſuch, as our own reaſon, and the written Law of God command they ſhould be.

The end of this examination, or reckoning with our ſelves, is to prepare our ſelves for that great account which we muſt all give at the Day of Judgment; to correct whatever we find to be amiſs in us, and to go on and perſevere in whatever we find to be good, that ſo we may be ready for the *ſecond coming of our Lord.* Whatever therefore we ſhall be accountable for at that day, falls very properly under our preſent examination. And, ſince we are very well aſſured that we muſt then give an account

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of our thoughts, words and actions, it becomes us now to make an exact and careful ſcrutiny of them.

Firſt, We muſt examine our thoughts; For there are Laws for theſe, as well as for our words and actions, and conſequently, by a tranſgreſſion of theſe Laws, we become guilty of Sin, which is nothing elſe but *a tranſgreſſion of the Law*; and if guilty of Sin, then liable to Judgment. Our Saviour has told us, that *whoſoever looketh upon a woman, to luſt after her, hath committed adultery*; that is, whoſoever, upon the ſight of a beautiful Woman, conceives in his heart a luſtful deſire of committing adultery with her; tho' he does not actually do it, ſhall be look't upon by God as an actual adulterer. And, in another place of Scripture, he condemns the Phariſees for *making clean the outſide of the cup and platter*, and having no regard to the inſide. That is, as he Himſelf afterwards explains it, for endeavouring *to appear righteous unto men*, and, in the mean while, harbouring all Hypocritical and wicked thoughts. For this he denounceth a terrible woe againſt them, Mat. 23. 27. *Woe unto you Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites; for ye are like unto whited Sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outwards, but are within full of dead mens bones and all uncleanneſs.* Our firſt buſineſs therefore muſt be

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to enquire whither our inſides are clean, for unleſs they be, an outward cleanlineſs will avail us nothing at that day, when *God ſhall judge the ſecrets of mens hearts.*

Secondly, We muſt examine our words. Becauſe we muſt be accountable for theſe at the great Day of Judgment; as our Saviour aſſures us. 12 Mat. 36, 37. *But I ſay unto you that every idle word, that men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall give an account thereof in the Day of Judgment. For by thy words thou ſhalt be juſtifi'd, and by thy words thou ſhalt be condemned.* And ſurely then it highly concerns us to examine whither we have been guilty of ſpeaking ſuch idle words, as will infallibly condemn us *at the great and terrible day of the Lord.*

Thirdly and Laſtly, We muſt examine our actions. For we very well know, *that we muſt all ſtand before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt, that every one may recieve the things done in his body, according to what he hath done, whither it be good or evil.* All our actions muſt be accounted for at the laſt day; not onely our Publick ones which have been acted in the face of the World, but alſo our moſt ſecret ones, which have been done in our Chambers and Cloſets. God, *unto whoſe eyes all things are naked and open*, will bring every thing, even *the moſt ſecret thing* into Judgment. And therefore

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it ſtands us in ſtead carefully to weigh all our paſt actions, and try whither they are ſuch as will bear God's ſevere examination at the Day of Judgment.

In a word, we muſt call our ſelves to an account, for all our thoughts, words and actions, before the Bar of right Reaſon, and the Holy Scriptures, which together contain the full will of God. And we may with aſſurance conclude, that whatever is agreeable to theſe is our Duty: and on the contrary, that whatever thwarts and oppoſeth theſe is certainly ſin. Theſe are that rule, which if we keep to, we can not poſſibly miſtake; but we muſt be careful never to ſeparate theſe, leſt, by ſo doing, we make only a partial judgment, and deceive our ſelves.

But I ſhall not ſatisfie my ſelf with this General account of this Duty. I think my ſelf oblig'd to give more particular Directions concerning it, and to put you in a Method of performing it ſo exactly, that no one ſin ſhall eſcape you.

And, in order to this, I would have you Conſider, that a Man's thoughts, words, and actions make up that whole Duty, which he owes to God, his Neighbour, and himſelf. And therefore the only way to know when we have diſcharg'd our Duty, is to enquire whither our thoughts, words and actions have been ſuch, as they ought to be,

be towards God, our Neighbour and our ſelves. And this we ſhall find out by asking our Conſciences ſuch Queſtions, as I ſhall preſently inſtruct you in.

But, before I do this, it will be very neceſſary to give you a few cautions concerning the examining your Self.

Firſt, be not partial to your Self in your examination. Put not a better conſtruction upon your thoughts, words and actions, than they will juſtly bear. But rather aggravate your faults then leſſen them: For it will be much more for thy intereſt, to think thy Self rather worſe, than better than indeed thou art. If thou lookeſt upon thy ſins to be greater then they are, this will onely quicken thy diligence, awaken thy care, increaſe thy ſorrow for them, and haſten thy Repentance. But if thou flatter'ſt thy Self, by repreſenting them to thy Self to be leſs than they really are, thy caſe will be very miſerable. For then thou canſt neither be ſo ſorrowful for them, nor repent ſo truly of them, as thou oughteſt to do; but thou wilt lay a neceſſity upon thy Self of living in an impenitent ſtate: For ſo much as thou takeſt either from the number or bulk of thy ſins, ſo far will thy Repentance fall ſhort of being ſuch, as it ought to be. Conſider, Dear Chriſtian, that it is thy own Soul which is now at

ſtake,

ſtake, that no body can ſuffer by thy miſ-reckoning but thy Self; and that, if thou takeſt not great care to keep true accompts, thou may'ſt eaſily deceive thy Self into eternal ruine. In a word, Conſider how much ſafer it is, to be too exact than to neglect even the leaſt thing; how much more danger there is of Preſumption than Deſpair; and then thou may'ſt be careleſs if thou canſt.

Secondly, Do not examine thy Self by way of compariſon; that is, by comparing thy Self with thy Neighbours, and onely enquiring whither thou art better or worſe than they. It is, God knows, a very common thing, even with the beſt of us, to ſay with the proud *Phariſee Lord I am not as this man*? Now, ſuppoſing this to be ſo, yet what is it to the purpoſe? We ſhall not be ask'd at the Day of Judgment whither we were better than our next Neighbours, but whither we have diſcharg'd all thoſe Duties, which our own reaſon and the revealed will of God oblig'd us to It will not avail us at that Great day to alledge that there were other men worſe than us; For alas! How does this any way excuſe our diſobedience, that other men have been diſobedient as well as we? What would it ſignifie for a Malefactor, when he is upon his Tryal, to inform the Judge that there were other men

to

to be try'd, who are guilty of much greater Faults then ever he was? Do you think, upon this, the Judge would pronounce him innocent? Or do ye not think that he would tell him this was no excuse for him, but that there was a settled Law, by which his actions must be try'd, and by which he must stand or fall? The same is our case. If we can justifie our actions by our rule, than are we indeed innocent: but if we have nothing else to say for our selves, but that we have not been so bad as other men, we shall find but a little comfort in this excuse. Deceive not thy Self therefore, O man, but try all thy thoughts, words and actions, by their proper Touch-stones, thine own reason, and God's written Law. If these acquit thee, then thou art indeed acquitted; and, if these condemn thee, thou wilt most certainly be condemn'd.

Having premised these two cautions, I shall now give you some heads of Self examination; under some one or other of which, every branch of your Duty is contain'd

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Heads

Heads of Self-Examination.

I.

Of our Duty towards God.

HAVE you always firmly believ'd that there is but one, Eternal, Spiritual, Invisible God, the Fountain of all Perfection and Happyness, who alone made all things both Visible and Invisible, and preserveth and governeth them by his Power and Providence. Have you always believ'd him to be infinitely Holy, Just, Good, Merciful, Powerful, Wise and True, and that he is every where present? Have you constantly believ'd in him, fear'd him, lov'd him with all your Heart, Mind, Soul and Strength? Have you given Thanks to him, and Prais'd him every day? Have you put your whole Trust in him, and firmly depended upon him? Have you call'd upon him frequently in his Church, in your Family and Closet? Have you Honoured his Holy Name and every thing relating to him? Have you firmly believ'd the Scriptures to be his Word? And have you in all your Thoughts, Words and Actions, endeavour'd conscientiously to obey his Laws?

II. *Of*

II.

Of our Duty towards our Neighbour.

Ha'ſt thou loved thy Neighbour as thy ſelf? Ha ſt thou done unto all Men as you would they ſhould do unto you? Ha'ſt thou lov'd, honour'd, and to the utmoſt of thy Power aſſiſted thy Parents, and Relations? Ha'ſt thou honour'd and faithfully obey'd the King, and all his Miniſters, in all their Commands, which have not been contrary to the Word of God? Ha'ſt thou humbly ſubmitted thy ſelf to all thy Governours, Teachers, and Spiritual Paſtors and Maſters? Have you order'd your ſelf Lowly and Reverently to all your betters? Have you hurt no Body by Word or Deed? Ha'ſt thou been true and juſt in all thy Dealings? Ha'ſt thou bore no Malice nor Hatred in thy Heart? Ha'ſt thou kept thy Hands from Picking and Stealing, and thy Tongue from Evil-Speaking, Lying, and Slandring? Ha'ſt thou not tempted thy Neighbour to Intemperance, Wickedneſs, or Lewdneſs? Ha'ſt thou not coveted or deſired other Men's Goods? But have you Learn'd and Labour'd to get your own Living, and to do your Duty towards all Men in that State, in which it has pleas'd God to place you.

Of

III.

Of your Duty to your Self.

Ha'ſt thou had always humble thoughts of thy ſelf, thy Performances, thy Riches, Honour, Wit, Beauty, and every thing elſe belonging to thee? Ha'ſt thou been of a Sedate and Eaſie Temper, not given to Peeviſhneſs? Haſt thou conſider'd well of all thy Actions, before thou did'ſt commit them, and haſt thou conſtantly examin'd them, to ſee whither they were done according to God's Laws, after they were done? Ha'ſt thou been contented in thy Worldly Condition, and Diligent and Watchful in thy Station? Ha'ſt thou avoided all Unclean Lewd Thoughts, Words or Actions, and every thing tending to Encourage them? Ha'ſt thou been Temperate in thy Meat, Drink, Sleep, and Apparel? Ha'ſt thou avoided Idleneſs and all Unlawful Recreations? Ha'ſt thou ſo us'd thy Body in all things, as to make it moſt ſerviceable to thy Soul? Ha'ſt thou, mortify'd it, and kept it down by frequent Faſtings? Or at leaſt haſt thou never pamper'd it by Exceſs of Meat and Drink, either in Quantity or Quality?

Thus muſt you Queſtion your ſelf concerning your paſt Thoughts, Words and Actions; and in what particular ſoever you find you have tranſgreſs'd, be ſure to take ſpecial notice of your faults, in order to your confeſſing them to God, begging his Pardon for them, and repenting of them.

And this I would have you do every Night, beginning from the time when you firſt awoke in the Morning, and ſo going on through the ſeveral paſſages of the day to the time of your performing this Duty. And, that you may be ſure never to omit the daily Practiſe of this Duty, always be mindful of theſe two things.

Firſt, That the Thoughts, Words and Actions of a day are many and various, and that our Memories are Short and Treacherous; aud therefore they are not fit to be truſted with a very large Accompt. It will puzzle very many of us, I believe, to recount the Paſſages of our Life from Morning till Night; eſpecially it will be difficult to recollect our Thoughts, which, being for the moſt part vain and fooliſh, rambling and irregular, we have no Method to perſue in taking a review of them. We may poſſibly from the place where we have been, and the Company we have been in, make ſome Collection of the Words and Actions of a day, though a very Imperfect one. But

we ſhall find it almoſt impoſſible to call to mind our thoughts, which perhaps have had no connexion with the Place or Company in which we have been. If then it is ſo difficult a Task to bring back to our view one day of our Life, how much more difficult will it be, to take an Account of two or three together. If our Memories are ſo ſhallow and deceitful that we dare not truſt them in our Worldly Concerns, hardly for an hour, much leſs for a day; ſurely we will not venture to truſt them any long while, in our Spiritual Concerns, which are of much more Weight and Importance; in our Spiritual Concerns, where a miſtake may be of very ill Conſequence, of no leſs Conſequence than the Eternal Ruin of our Souls and Bodies. Indeed, would our Worldly Occaſions permit us, there would be reaſon enough for us to examine our ſelves every hour, nay to keep a conſtant Regiſtry of all we think, ſay, or do. But though this is Impracticable, a Daily Examination of our ſelves is not. This we may eaſily do; and this we muſt do, if we truely and ſincerely intend to make ſuch a reckoning with our ſelves, as we ſhall be the better for.

Secondly,

Secondly, Another reaſon, why I would never have you let a day ſlip without a ſtrick Examination of your Self, is becauſe you are not ſure that you ſhall live to perform this Duty the next day; ſo that were it poſſible for us to carry in our Memories the Thoughts, Words, and Actions of our Lives, from one day to another, yet it would be very unſafe to do it. For *who knows what a day may bring forth*? Who is there that can aſſure himſelf of a moments continuance in this World? who but a Fool will venture to ſay that he will let his Accompts alone till to morrow; when alas! to morrow is not in his power, and perhaps he may never live to ſee it. Make uſe therefore of the preſent time, and do not dare to put off this weighty Work, leſt by doing ſo thou ſhouldſt provoke God to cut thee off from *the Land of the Living*, and time ſhould be to thee no more. Conſider with thy Self, when thy bed time draws near, how uncertain a thing it is, whither thou ſhalt ever awake in this World again or no. Conſider this, I ſay, and then tell me whither it be not highly fitting for thee, to caſt up thy Accompts, and to ſettle the Affairs of thy Soul; that ſo, if thy Sleep ſhould prove the Sleep of Death, thou may'ſt awake with joy and comfort in the next World, as every good Soul will,

which has taken care thus to prepare it ſelf for this ſudden Change. But, Lord! what horrour and confuſion will that Man be in, who, having put off this neceſſary Work from day to day, finds himſelf at laſt depriv'd of all opportunities of performing it! If therefore thou deſireſt *to lay thy ſelf down in peace, and ſleep*, it will be proper for thee to examine the State of thy Soul every Night, before thy Bed-time, that ſo thou may'ſt acknowledge thy ſins to God, beg his Pardon for them, and ſincerely reſolve to forſake them. This onely can make thy Bed eaſie and ſafe, by freeing thee from the troubleſome fears of Death, and ſo preparing thee for it, that, if it ſhould come, it would prove to thee not an Enemy but a Friend.

But, beſides this daily Examination of our Selves, we muſt be careful alſo to obſerve ſome ſpecial Seaſons, when the performance of this Duty is in a peculiar manner requiſite. As,

Firſt, Before the receiving of the Lord's Supper. And for this we have the expreſs command of God. 1 Cor. 11. 28. *Let a man examine himſelf, and ſo let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.* And the reaſon of St. *Paul*'s giving us this advice we find in the next Verſe 29. *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and*

drink

drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lords body. So that here the Apostle supposeth that all such Men, as did not examine themselves, before they came to the Lords-Supper, would eat and drink unworthily when they came thither. And this he might well suppose; for surely no Man can be a fit Guest for the Table of the pure and immaculate Jesus, who has not endeavour'd to find out all his spots and blemishes, and to cleanse himself from them. No Man ought to presume to draw near towards the Altar of that God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, but he who has made it his business to purge and wash himself from his sins, and thereby has render'd himself fit for God to look upon. Whensoever therefore thou resolvest with thy Self to receive the Holy Sacrament, and this thou oughtest to do as often as thou hast an opportunity of receiving it, it will become thee to set apart some time for the performance of this Duty, *and so to search and examine your Conscience*, as our Church exhorts us, (*and that not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God*) *that you may come Holy and clean to this Heavenly Feast, in the Marriage Garment requir'd by God in Holy Scripture, and be received as a worthy partaker of that Holy Table.*

Secondly, This Duty is, in a more than ordinary manner, neceſſary, at ſuch times, as the Church has appointed, for publick Faſting, and Humiliation, and Mortification; eſpecially at *Lent*, when, by the Churches appointment, Gods anger and Judgments are denounc'd againſt Sinners. At this time certainly it behoveth us to Examine our State and Condition, that we may know whither we are of the number of thoſe, againſt whom God's Judgments are denounc'd, or whither we have been careful to avoid thoſe ſins, which provoke the wrath of God againſt all ungodly Men. Theſe times are purpoſely deſign'd by the Church, for the improvement of our Souls, and therefore ought to be ſpent in ſuch Religious exerciſes as will promote this great and Noble end; particularly in ſuch a ſevere and impartial examination of our Selves, as will give us a true ſight of all our Faults.

Thirdly, Self-Examination is abſolutely neceſſary in times of Trouble and Affliction, whither Private or Publick.

Private Men very often cheriſh ſome one Darling ſin in their Boſoms, which is the cauſe of many heavy Judgments that fall upon them. And therefore when they are in diſtreſs and perplexity, it will be very proper for them to examine themſelves, and to try whither

they

they can find the cause of this their trouble within themselves. There is no doubt, but every Man will be able to give himself a good reason for his Afflictions, that seriously Considers his own Life. Here we shall certainly find that, which may be a just cause of our Troubles, whither it be really or no. And by finding out this, we shall be put into a way of easing our Selves from the burthen of them, by removing that, which in all probability is the cause of them.

But whither this will hold good or no, as to all Private Men, it is hard to say. But it is certainly true of all Communities and Publick Bodies. God never scourgeth them, but for their Sins. *A Righteous Nation shall be exalted*, but Sin not only brings a Reproach, but very often Severe Punishments too, upon any People. In a time therefore of Publick Affliction and Calamity, God does, as it were, call to every particular Member of the Community, to examine the course of his Life, and see if he can find *any way of wickedness in it.* It is certain, that we are *afflicted for the multitude of our transgressions*; and therefore it becomes every Individual Man of us to Try and Examine how far we are the Causes of these Publick Calamities; that is, to Try how far every one of us either Cherisheth

in himself, or Encourageth in others those Sins, which are the certain Cause of this National Affliction.

At such times as these, *Viz.* before we receive the Sacrament; in times appointed by the Church for Fasting, Humiliation and Mortification; and in times of Publick or Private Calamities; we must be very strict in the performance of this Duty. We must be more particular in it, at these times, than in our daily practise of it; and therefore I would not have you use those Heads of Self-Examination now, which I have set down for your daily use; but I would have you examine your selves by those particular heads of your Duty, which you will find at the end *of the Whole Duty of Man.* These are so long, that it would take up too much time to overlook them every Night; and therefore I endeavour'd to give you, for your constant use, only an Abstract or Abridgement of them. But at these particular Seasons, you may find time enough to overlook and consider them, as they lie at large. To these I would advise you to add the Creed, commonly call'd the Apostles; at the end of every Article of which I would have you ask your self, whither you firmly and steadfastly believe it. In both these joyn'd together you will find all that is necessary for you to believe and do in order to your Salvation;

vation; and by a Serious and Exact View of them, you will easily discover what faults you have been guilty of, and consequently ought to amend; and what Duties you have discharg'd, as it became you, and consequently ought to persevere in.

Now, That you may not want Encouragements to the performance of this Duty, I will represent to you the many and great Benefits that will certainly follow a Conscientious performance of it; each of which I hope will prove a powerful Motive to Engage you to a constant practise of it.

First, Nothing will so effectually teach us Humility, as a Conscientious discharge of this Duty. For this will every day shew us more and more our own Vileness and Unworthiness. It will give us frequent Instances of the Depravity of our Natures, of our backwardness to all good, and readiness to all Evil; of the blindness of our Understandings, the perverseness of our Wills, the coldness of our Appetites and Affections towards all good, and our continual thirsting after forbidden things. It will every day convince us of our folly in pursuing Shadows, and letting go the Substance; of busying our selves about Trifles, and neglecting the most Weighty Matters. In a word, we shall, upon examination, find our

ſelves to be every day guilty of ſo much Vanity and Folly, ſo much Trifling and Impertinence, ſo much Baſeneſs and Ingratitude, ſo much Paſſion and Peeviſhneſs, ſo much Impudence and Prophaneneſs, ſo much Sin and Wickedneſs, that we ſhall have very great reaſon to humble our ſelves even unto the ground, and to look upon our ſelves, as the moſt Vile and Deſpicable Creatures in the whole World. For if a dayly ſight of our Weakneſs and Imperfections, our Errours and Miſtakes, our Careleſneſs and Imprudence, will not ſhame us into a low Opinion of our ſelves, I know not what will. We need only look into our ſelves to find Arguments for Humility, and God knows, we afford our ſelves too many. There is ſcarce a Thought in our Minds, or a Word in our Mouths, much leſs any Action, which is not full of Folly and Wickedneſs; ſo that we may every one of us juſtly ſay, with Holy *Job*, *I abhor my ſelf, and repent in duſt and aſhes*.

Secondly, A Daily Examination of our ſelves will, in all probability, keep us from accuſtoming our ſelves to any evil courſe. When a Man takes no notice of his Actions, but lives without conſideration, he is like an ill Husband who never keeps any Accompts, and therefore will be very likely to run into Extravagance. But when a Man, like

like a prudent and good Husband, keeps his Accompts exact and clear, and has them alwayes in his Eye, it is hardly to be thought he will undoe himself by living knowingly and wilfully in such a way as will certainly ruine him. We shall by our dayly Examination find out our faults, when they are young, and easie to be conquer'd; before they have got the Mastery over us, and have made us their Slaves. And sure we shall not meet with any difficulty in resisting a Temptation or leaving a Sin, which is but a day old, and consequently cannot have made any very strong Engagement with our Inclinations and Affections. But however, if we do not always leave a Sin upon our first discovery of it, yet I think it will be, morally speaking, impossible to habituate our selves to it, and persist long in the practise of it, when every Night, that comes over our Heads, we shall calmly and deliberately judge it to be a Sin, and consequently dangerous to be persisted in. Few Men, that will take the pains thus frequently to examine themselves, can be suppos'd to have arriv'd to such a pitch of Wickedness as this is. For their very examination of themselves is an owning their Sense of Religion, and the obligations they lye under to it. This advantage we may therefore justly expect from a constant performance of this Duty,

that

that it will make us walk ſo warily, that no Temptation ſhall be able to prevail upon us ſo often as to make us it's conſtant Slaves and Vaſſals; but, if we have the misfortune once or twice to be drawn aſide by it, yet our daily examination will ſo frequently condemn us for it, and make us ſo uneaſie under it, that it is very reaſonably to be hop'd we ſhall without any great difficulty forſake it, before it gets the Dominion over us.

Thirdly and *Laſtly*, This will afford us Joy unſpeakable. For by this frequent Examination of our ſelves we ſhall eaſily know, whither we are indeed the Children of God, and Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven or no? And if our Conſciences will teſtifie for us, *That in ſimplicity and Godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our Converſation in the world*; then may we indeed rejoyce, with a reaſonable and well-grounded Joy. To theſe we muſt appeal, and, if, upon an exact and impartial Scrutiny, theſe acquit us, then are we indeed acquitted. Here alone can we find a Foundation for ſuch True and Inexpreſſible Joy and Satisfaction, as nothing elſe in the World can afford us. This was St. *Paul's* Triumph, That *he had a Conſcience void of offence towards God and*

towards

towards man. And if our Consciences will give us the same Testimony, we shall be partakers of the same Triumphant Joy.

But perhaps you will say that you dare not examine your self, for fear you should not obtain this Testimony from your Conscience. You know that your Conscience is true, and will accuse as well as excuse you; and therefore you dare not question it, lest it should give you such Answers, as you are very unwilling to hear.

If this be your case, it is indeed very pitiable, and you have great reason to be concerned, when you think on it; but this still makes the Practise of this Duty more necessary than before. He who is sick, has more need to examine into the state of his Body, than he who is in good health. And he who is oppress'd at Conscience with a heavy Burthen of sins, has more need to search into it, than he who feels little or no Burthen at all there. The first step towards amendment is the discovery of our fault; for this lays the Cause of our Distemper before us, and thereby gives us all the opportunity of easing our selves, that we can desire. He therefore that would heal a wounded Conscience, must first enquire what it was that gave his Conscience this Wound; and, having found that out, he may easily apply such Medicines as in due time will work its Cure.

Say

Say not therefore with thy Self, O Sinner, that thou knoweſt thy Conſcience will condemn thee, and therefore thou wilt not ask its Verdict. This is a ſure way to Eternal Ruine. But reſolve thus with thy ſelf. I confeſs, O Lord, that my Soul is at preſent in a very bad Condition, defil'd with all manner of Sin, and heavy laden with grief and anguiſh. What ſhall I do then? Shall I be afraid to look into it? Alas! Then I ſhall grow continually worſe and worſe, and become every day Ten fold more the Child of Satan, than I was the day before. No, I am reſolv'd what I will do; I will dive into the very bottom of my Soul, and make a ſtrict ſearch for thoſe Sins, which make me afraid of my ſelf. I will never leave ſearching till I have found them all out, and when I have found them, I will tear them out by force from my Soul, and never more ſuffer them to enter in. Then, and not till then, ſhall I enjoy a quiet and ſedate Spirit, and partake of *that peace of God which paſſeth all underſtanding.*

But ſurely, the pleaſure that a Pious Soul muſt have in looking over its Accompts, is beyond all Expreſſion. How does the Merchant rejoyce, when, upon examination of his Books, he finds all his Affairs to Proſper and Succeed, even according to his Hearts deſire?

desire? And, if this be matter of such joy to us, What an unspeakable Transport shall we be in, when upon Examination of our Spiritual Accouuts, we shall find that we have behav'd our selves so as becometh the *Heirs of Promise*. When our Consciences shall give us this Testimony, that we have *walked worthy of our Vocation*, and shall receive for our Reward *an Eternal Inheritance in the Heavens*. Blessed God! How Infinitely great will the Joy of that Soul be, which, after a strict and impartial search into it self, can safely apply those words of our Saviour to it self, *Well done thou good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* This is indeed to anticipate and foretaste the Joys of Heaven; it is to make a Heaven upon Earth, and truely and properly to have our Converfation in Heaven whilst we are here. But, I need say no more to this purpose. The pleasure and satisfaction that every good Man has felt in the performance of this Duty, will more powerfully engage him to the constant practise of it, than any thing, which I can say. And the Advantage which all bad Men have found, by a serious and constant Exercise of it, is Invitation enough to any Sinner to set about it.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Of Confession of Sins.

AFter you have carefully examin'd your self, and have found what Sins you have committed, and what Duties omitted; your next business must be, to make an acknowledgment both of your Sins of Commission and Omission to God.

To confess your Sins is not barely to own to God that you have sinned, and to tell him what Sins you have been guilty of; for alas! He who knoweth all things, has no need of this: But it is to acknowledge your sins, with a most hearty Shame and Sorrow for them, and a firm Resolution to amend them. He, who makes these the Companions of his Verbal Confession, does truely and properly confess his Sins; but he who satisfyeth himself with a formal telling of God that he has been guilty of such and such Sins, and thinks that the bare mentioning of them is sufficient, offers to God the *Sacrifice of Fools*, and sadly deceives his own Soul. To own that you have sinned,

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is to own that you have been a Base and Ungrateful Rebel against God, and that you have done that, which, if you do not repent of it, will sink you into Eternal Misery. And can you do this heartily and sincerely, without taking shame to your self, without being griev'd at your folly that has brought you into this dangerous Condition, and without resolving immediately to get out of it? No certainly, it is in vain for any Man to say, that he doth truely confess his Sins, unless he is thus affected with the Sense of them. He may indeed own them outwardly with his Lips, but this is not that Confession which God requires of us. This outward Confession must be accompanied with the Inward Confession of the Soul; and if this be such as it ought to be, it will show it self by producing in us a most humble Shame, and hearty sorrow for our Sins, and a steadfast Resolution of leaving them.

First, I say, If our Confession be such as it ought to be, *i. e.* If it proceeds from the bottom of our Souls, it will most certainly make us asham'd of what we have done. Sin is a breach of the Laws of God, whom we are bound upon many accounts to Obey, as he is our Creator and Preserver, the Just and Wise Governour of the World, and our continual Friend and Benefactor. And therefore

fore to acknowledge that we have sinned, is to acknowledge that we have been perfidiousand unfaithful, *base* and ungrateful *Wretches*; And is it possible for us to think seriously that we are so, without being asham'd and confounded at it? Is it possible for us sincerely to confess this, and yet to take no Shame to our selves? No surely, it is not. It is meer dissembling with God, to tell him, that we are sensible how vilely and foolishly we have affronted him, and yet at the same time, not so much as to blush at what we say. This plainly discovers that our hearts go not along with our lips, and that we say things which we do not know the meaning of. For to be throughly convinc'd that we have done those things which we ought to be very much asham'd of, and yet not to be asham'd, is a thing inconsistent. Shame naturally ariseth from a sense of our having done what was not becoming; and therefore where this is wanting, it is justly to be fear'd a due sense of our Faults is wanting too. Holy *Ezra* in his Confession of sins begins thus, *I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God; for our iniquities are increased over our heads, and our trespass is grown up to the Heavens*, And thus doth *Jeremiah* represent the *Israelites*, confessing their sins: *We lie down in our shame, and our confusion cover-*

covereth us, for we have sinned against the Lord our God, we and our Fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God. And thus doth pious *Daniel*, in his Confession of sins, acknowledg his own and the peoples shame: *O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our Kings, to our Princes, and to our Fathers, because we have sinned against thee.* And thus also must we be affected, when we make a Confession of our sins to God: *Our confusion must be continually before us, and the shame of our faces must cover us.* We must feel the reproaches of that baseness and dis-ingenuity, which we own our selves to be guilty of, within us; or else we do not heartily and sincerely acknowledge them.

Secondly, Our Confession must be accompanied with a sorrow for our sins. If we are truely sensible of the great danger we have brought our selves into by sinning, we cannot help being concerned at it. Grief is nothing else but a discomposure and uneasiness of Mind, occasioned by our feeling that which at present is, looking back upon that which has been, or forward upon that which will most certainly prove hurtful to us. And therefore it is nonsence to say, that we do heartily acknowledge before God, that we are sensible of that great danger which our sins have brought us into, and yet at

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the ſame time, to be eaſie and unconcerned under this ſenſe of Danger. Nay it is Blaſphemy to own that we are in a ſtate of Damnation, which every ſinner is who has not Repented of his ſins, and yet to ſhow no ſorrow or concern for this our truly deplorable Condition. Hardineſs under ſuch circumſtances as theſe, proceeds from want of Senſe; and therefore to acknowledge that we have ſinned, and not to be ſorry for it, is to ſhow that we know not what ſinning means. This is a poor heartleſs Confeſſion which will never reach up to Heaven; thither our Confeſſion of our Sins and our Sorrow for them muſt go together. Theſe are inſeparable Companions, and it is in vain to think of offering up the firſt to God without the latter. *I will declare mine iniquity*, ſaith Holy *David*, *I will be ſorry for my ſins*: And in another place, when he is confeſſing his Sins, *My ſorrow*, ſaith he, *is continually before me*. And ſo muſt ours be too, or elſe our Confeſſion will be to no purpoſe.

Thirdly, It muſt be accompanied with a ſteady reſolution of leaving our Sins, and performing our Duty better for the future. For when we own that we have ſinned, we own that we have done that which is wrong, and conſequently ought to be amended; and that which will Eternally damn us, if it be not repented of. So that if we are truly

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ſenſible of what we ſay, when we confeſs our ſins, as we muſt be if we hope to be accepted by God, we ſhall feel in our ſelves a firm Reſolution of *amending our ways*, and turning unto *the Lord*. If we do not, our Confeſſion is not ſincere; for it is impoſſible for us ſeriouſly to own that we are in ſuch a condition, that, if we do not Repent we ſhall certainly be Damned, and yet not to think of Repenting.

By theſe Marks may you know whether your Confeſſion is ſuch, as it ought to be. If you are truely aſhamed, and heartily ſorry for the Sins which you confeſs, if you firmly reſolve to leave them, and to become better; then is your Confeſſion ſincere, and ſuch as God requires. If not, you onely mock God, and deceive your ſelf, by an outward Confeſſion of that, which you have no inward ſenſe of.

This Confeſſion of our Sins muſt be two-fold; General and Particular.

In General, We muſt acknowledge that we are Naturally inclined to do Evil, that there is ſcarce a thought in our Hearts which is good; that we are continually violating the Commands of God, and that we have been guilty of very many Sins which have eſcaped our notice. In a word, that our

our whole Lives have been full of Folly and Wickedneſs, and that we have thought, ſaid or done ſomething almoſt every moment of them, which was diſpleaſing to God.

In Particular, We muſt confeſs thoſe ſins, which upon Examination we have found our ſelves to have been guilty of, of what ſort or kind ſoever they may be. We muſt acknowledge them at length one by one; that ſo by a particular enumeration of them, our ſhame may be increaſed, our ſorrow inlarged, and our reſolutions of leaving our ſins, quickned and ſtrengthned.

But it is not enough barely thus to reckon up our ſins, we muſt be ſure to aggravate them alſo; that is, to ſhow that they have been done with ſuch circumſtances, as make them much worſe than ſimply in their own nature they are. Thus for Inſtance we muſt own, not onely that we have ſinned, but that we have ſinned againſt the cleareſt light poſſible, againſt the moſt powerful checks and convictions of Conſcience, upon the ſlighteſt Temptations, and the pooreſt inducements that could be offer'd us. Breifly, we muſt recollect every thing that will ſerve to make us look ſtill baſer and baſer in our own eyes, and to heighten the folly and guilt of our ſins. If any man deſires to receive more particular Inſtructions about this

this matter, he may find them in *Bishop* Wilkins's *Excellent discourse concerning the Gift of Prayer.*

There is one thing more which we must observe in our Confessions, and that is, to acknowledge the punishment which is due to our Sins. To own that we have behav'd our selves so, as to deserve the greatest severities from God that he can inflict upon us, either in this World, or that which is to come. And the serious consideration of these things will very much conduce to the exciting such Affections in us, as do become the Duty of Confession.

As for the frequency of our Confession, it ought to be twice a day at least, *Viz.* when we offer up our Morning and Evening Sacrifice of Prayer. It has been the Custom of all Holy Men of Old to usher in their Prayers to God with a Confession of their Sins. This has been so constantly practised by all Pious Men, that Confession is now look't upon as a part of Prayer; though strictly and properly, as I told you before, it is not so. And this practice of theirs seems to me to have been founded upon extraordinary good Reason. For they thought themselves unworthy to ask any thing of God, till they had humbled themselves before him in a sorrowful confession of their sins, and a firm resolution to leave them,

them; and ſo certainly they were. And this reaſon has been always thought ſo good, that this Cuſtom of beginning our Prayers with a Confeſſion of our ſins has been continued down even to us; and accordingly our Excellent Church follows this Method in her Publick Service. Whenſoever therefore we offer up our Prayers to God in Private, which we muſt do at leaſt twice a day, as I ſhall hereafter have occaſion to ſhow you, we muſt let our Confeſſions go before us to the Throne of Grace to make way for our Prayers.

The poſture which will beſt become us, in the performance of this Duty, is kneeling; this being reckoned the moſt humble poſture amongſt us, and conſequently moſt fit for this humble Office. Moreover, this was the poſture which the Holy Men and Prophets of old uſed in the Confeſſion of their Sins. Thus do we read of *Ezra*, *ch.* 9. *ver.* 5. *That he fell upon his knees, and ſpread out his hands unto the Lord his God, and ſaid, O my God*, &c. And thus did Holy *Daniel*, as we may read, *ch.* 6. *ver.* 11. So that if we think that the Prophets of God himſelf are worthy our Imitation, this is the Poſture which will moſt become us. Let us therefore, as our Church Exhorts, draw near to God, and make our humble Confeſſion to him, meekly kneeling on our knees.

I ſhall

I shall not here set down any form of Confession, but I will direct you to two extraordinary good ones, which are composed according to the above-mentioned Rules. These you will find ready for your use at the latter end of *The Whole Duty of Man*, and these I would advise you constantly to keep to.

I will not trouble you with a particular enumeration of all those benefits and advantages, which we shall receive from a constant performance of this Duty. There is one so transcendently great, and so much beyond all the rest, that I think I should disparage your judgments, if I should offer any other to your consideration. And this is the Promise which is made us. 1 *John* 1. 9. *That if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*, i. e. If we confess our sins with a true shame and sorrow for them, and a steady resolution to leave them, God will free us from the punishment of our sins, and not suffer them to rise up in Judgment against us. This indeed is a noble Argument to encourage us frequently and sincerely to perform this Duty. Our Sins, *which before were as red as Scarlet*, shall *now become as white as Snow*, and our Pardons shall be sealed to us by the hand of God himself. So that, if we take

them; and so certainly they were. And this reason has been always thought so good, that this Custom of beginning our Prayers with a Confession of our sins has been continued down even to us; and accordingly our Excellent Church follows this Method in her Publick Service. Whensoever therefore we offer up our Prayers to God in Private, which we must do at least twice a day, as I shall hereafter have occasion to show you, we must let our Confessions go before us to the Throne of Grace to make way for our Prayers.

The posture which will best become us, in the performance of this Duty, is kneeling; this being reckoned the most humble posture amongst us, and consequently most fit for this humble Office. Moreover, this was the posture which the Holy Men and Prophets of old used in the Confession of their Sins. Thus do we read of *Ezra*, *ch.* 9. *ver.* 5. *That he fell upon his knees, and spread out his hands unto the Lord his God, and said, O my God*, &c. And thus did Holy *Daniel*, as we may read, *ch.* 6. *ver.* 11. So that if we think that the Prophets of God himself are worthy our Imitation, this is the Posture which will most become us. Let us therefore, as our Church Exhorts, draw near to God, and make our humble Confession to him, meekly kneeling on our knees.

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care to be true to our Confession, in the following part of our Lives; God will certainly make good his Promise, and will no more remember our Iniquities. Blessed God! O how Infinite art thou in thy Mercies, that settest so easie a Ransom upon us. As *Naaman* was commanded by the *Prophet* onely to wash and be clean, so are we commanded by our most Gracious God onely to confess our sins, and he has promised to forgive us. O let us hasten then to make sure of this Blessing. Let us prostrate our selves before God, and be heartily ashamed and greived at our sins, let us immediately resolve to forsake them, that so our God may delight in us to do us good, and to be merciful to us in the free pardon and remission of our sins. Behold Lord! We come, we come, all covered with shame and confusion, and inwardly possessed with a true hatred of our sins. *Receive us, O Gracious Father, receive us into the arms of thy mercy; Put away our sins far from us, and blot us not out of the Book of Life.* Then shall *we rejoyce with joy unspeakable*, and shall feel the efficacy of a sincere and Holy Confession.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Of PRAYER.

OUR Confessions must be immediately followed by our Prayers, which we may now offer with some sort of *boldness* at the *Throne of Grace*, having in some measure appeas'd our God, who before was angry with us for our sins, by a sincere and sorrowful Confession of them. And, because it is impossible for us to perform our Dutyes as we ought, before we throughly understand them, I think it will be necessary for us, in order to our understanding and discharging this Duty aright, briefly to enquire into these following particulars.

1. What Prayer is.
2. What we are to pray for. First, In general, Secondly more particularly in our Closets.
3. With what Dispositions of Mind our Prayers must be offered up to God.
4. In whose Name our Prayers must be offered up.

5. Whither it be most adviseable to use a set Form of Prayer in our Closets, or to pray extempore, or as some are pleas'd to call it, by the Spirit.

6. How often we must perform this Duty in our Closets.

7. And Lastly, What posture will best become us, while we are offering up our Prayers.

1. *Prayer*, according to the Common Notion and Acceptation of the Word, is a making Suits or Requests to any Person, and upon any account whatsoever. To Request or Sue for a thing, is to ask it in a meek and humble manner, to intreat and beg for it, and not to demand it. It is to ask for a thing in such a modest way, as if the thing, which we ask for, were not our Right and Due, but were to come from the Free Bounty and meer Goodness of him, to whom we make our Requests. In a word, it is to ask in such a manner, as may evidently show our Inability to help our selves, and our Entire Dependance upon him, to whom we address our selves, for that thing which we ask of him. Prayer then consider'd at large, is nothing else but an Humble, Modest, and Respectful way of Asking, a Begging or Intreating any thing of any Person whatsoever.

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But, consider'd, as it is a Religious Duty, it is onely an offering up of Requests to God, and therefore may very properly be said, in St. *Paul*'s Words, *Phil.* 4. 6. to be *a making known our requests unto God.* To him, and him alone must we pray, if we expect our Prayers should be looked upon as truely Religious Prayers. For he allows no Body to share with him in his Worship; but, as our Saviour tells us, *We must Worship the Lord our God, and him only must we serve.* In all our Necessities we are strictly commanded to have recourse to him, and no other. *Call upon the Lord*, and *call upon the Lord your God*, is the common Language of Scripture, but we are no where allow'ed, much less commanded, to pay this part of Religious Worship to any other. So that to pray, in a Religious Sense, is to put up our Requests to God, and God alone.

2. Having stated the Notion of Prayer, it will be needful in the next place to inform you what you are to pray for, and, in order to this, it will be convenient briefly to consider the several parts of Prayer distinctly, which are these Three.

First Petition, or a begging of Blessings and Mercies for our selves, both Spiritual and Temporal.

The Spiritual Blessings which we must pray for are these, Forgiveness of Sins, a true and stedfast Faith in Christ, and Grace to amend our Lives, and to improve in all Vertue and Holyness, and to persevere in them to our Lives end.

The Temporal Blessings, which we must ask for, are all the Necessaries and Conveniencies of this present Life. By Conveniencies I do not mean what every Man fancyeth to be convenient, but what really is so, what is so necessary to our Well-being here, that without it we must be in some degree miserable. Of this Nature are, Health, Friends, Reputation, Abilities suitable to our several Callings, Liberty, Peace, Food, Rayment, *&c.* But we must not pray for any of the Luxuries or Superfluities of Life, such as a great Estate, Vast Power and Authority, Mighty Honour and Respect, *&c.* These, if God pleaseth to bestow them on us, we must thankfully receive, but we must not presume to ask for them. Our Saviour alloweth us only to ask for our *daily-Bread*: *i. e.* for all things necessary for our Comfortable Support and Sustenance in this present Life.

Secondly, A second part of Prayer is *Intercession*, or a begging Blessings and Mercies for other Men. We must pray for all Men,

Men, not only our Governours, Parents, Friends, Relations and Benefactors (though these indeed we must pray for in a more especial manner) but also for our very Enemies; for thus has our Lord commanded us to pray for those *that despitefully use us. Matth.* 5. 24. And the Blessings which we ask for these, must be likewise Spiritual and Temporal.

1. Spiritual, If they are *Turks*, *Jews*, *Infidels*, or *Hereticks*, we must beg of God to forgive their Errors, and to bring them to the knowledge of the Truth, to Enlighten such of them as are in Darkness, and to Convert such as are in sin. If true Christians, we must beseech God to Pardon their Sins, to give them Grace to repent of them, and to amend their Lives, to do their Duties diligently in their several Callings, and to hold fast their most Holy Faith.

2. Temporal. The very same Temporal Blessings, which we asked for our selves, must we ask for them also. Our Saviour does not bid us, when we pray, to say, *Give me my dayly Bread, but give us our dayly Bread*, whereby he plainly shews us that we must ask the same Temporal Blessings for all other Men that we do for our selves, he himself having put us all together in one Petition.

Thirdly, The last part of Prayer is *Deprecation*, or a beseeching of God to divert Evils both from our selves and other Men. Thus our Saviour bids us pray, in his most admirable Form of Prayer, *Deliver us from Evil.* By Evil is meant principally Sin, which is indeed the onely true Evil of Man; and in the next place, all those Torments, Pains, Troubles, Disquietudes, Vexations, and Uneasinesses, which sin was the first cause of. So that to pray to be delivered from Evil, is to pray that God would keep us from being made Slaves to Sin, and from the Punishment that is due to it, and also from all Pains, Crosses, Troubles and Afflictions in this World, which may in some sense be called Evils.

This, in General, must be the subject matter of all our Prayers, in our Churches, our Families and our Closets. We must not at any set time of Prayer, ask less than this, either for our selves or other Men. If we do, our Prayers will be Lame and Imperfect, and Unfit to be offer'd to that God, who requires a perfect Sacrifice at our hands.

But in our Closets we must not content our selves with such a general performance of this Duty; we have there an opportunity of being more particular in our Prayers, than

than in Publick we could possibly be, and therefore we must not think to put God off with general Requests, but we must nicely enquire into our own and other Mens particular Wants, and put up particular Prayers for a supply of them.

Thus for Instance, we must not think it enough to beseech God in General to forgive our sins, but we must reckon up our particular Transgressions, and consider which are our most common and most heinous Sins, and then in an especial manner beg pardon for them. We must not satisfie our selves with asking God in general to give us his Grace, but we must reflect upon our selves and see what particular Graces we want most, whither Faith, Love, Hope, Humility, Zeal, Sincerity, or the like; and having found out which of all these we stand in greatest need of, we must particularly address our Prayers to God for it. In what particular point soever we find our Souls weak, there especially must we beg of God to supply our strength.

The same may be said as to our Temporal Concerns. If we are well in all respects, and have no particular want, then a general Prayer to God to continue us in our Condition may be sufficient; but if we are oppressed with Sickness, forsaken by, or bereav'd of our Friends, abus'd in our Repu-

tations, weak in our Abilities, depriv'd of our Liberty, perplex'd by Ill Men, or deſtitute of the Conveniencies of Life. If we are under any of theſe, or ſuch like particular preſſures, it will become us in a particular manner to beg of God to adminiſter proper Relief to us, and to eaſe us eſpecially from that particular Burthen, with which we are oppreſs'd.

And the ſame Method muſt we follow in our Interceſſions for others: If any of our Governours, Parents, Friends, Relations, Benefactors, nay, or our very Enemies have been drawn into any Notorious Sin; or manifeſtly ſtand in need of any Spiritual Grace or Good, it will be our Duty to beſeech God, in a particular manner, to pardon the former, and to beſtow upon them the latter.

Again, If we know any of them to be in Sickneſs, Need, Trouble, or any other Adverſity, we muſt be ſure to make particular mention of them in our Private Prayers, and to beg of God that he would ſupply their particular Wants.

Thus likewiſe in our Deprecations, if any Evil ſeems to be very near any of us, and plainly threatens us, we muſt particularly pray againſt it, in a more eſpecial manner than we do againſt any other Evil.

And the reason why we should be thus particular in our Private Prayers is very plain, *Viz.* Because God has no where promis'd us to give us any thing, but what we ask for. He has been pleas'd to make asking the Condition of Receiving, and making our Wants known the Condition of having them supplyed; not that he needs to be told what we want; for this he knows much better than we can tell him; but asking is a sort of Homage which he requires of us his Creatures, and without it we have no reason to expect any thing we stand in need of. When therefore we have time and opportunity to lay open our particular Wants before our Heavenly Father, as we have in our Closets, he will most undoubtedly expect it from us; and if we omit the doing of it, I see no reason why we should hope to receive from God any Relief or Supplyes suitable to our particular needs. Our Church it self, even in her Publick Prayers, takes a great deal of care to be as particular as possibly she can; and though she cannot possibly mention every particular Mans Wants by themselves, yet in several Cases she has order'd that a particular mention should be made of them. And surely if the Church endeavours so much to be particular in her Publick Prayers, we who have all opportunities of being more

more particular in our Private Prayers, ſhould not neglect being ſo. *David* in ſeveral places makes particular mention of his moſt heinous ſins, and begs particular Pardon for them. Thus in the 51 *Pſalm* he beſeeches God at large to pardon his Sins of Murder and Adultery; and in the ſame *Pſalm* particularly prays for ſome Spiritual Bleſſings, which he then ſtood in greateſt need of, ſuch as Purity of Heart, and Inward Joy and Comfort. And thus St. *Paul* tells *Timothy*, 2.1,3. that he alwayes made particular *remembrance of him in his Prayers*; and thus likewiſe in another place he aſſures *Philemon*, That *he alwayes made mention of him in his Prayers*, as he tells us he did alſo of the *Romans*, the *Epheſians*, and the *Theſſalonians*. Thus did Holy *Abraham* in Private intreat God to divert thoſe Judgments which he had threatned the *Sodomites* withal, *Gen.* 18. 23. And thus did *Moſes* particularly pray againſt thoſe Judgments which were juſt ready to deſcend upon the Children of *Iſrael*, *becauſe they had turned aſide out of the way which God commanded them, and had made them a Molten Calf*, as you may read, *Exod.* 32. 11. Nay thus did our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf, when he was praying in Private, and had ſome foretaſte of thoſe grievous ſufferings which he was juſt about to undergoe: Thus I ſay did

did he beseech God in a particular manner, That *if it were possible, that cup might pass from him.* Thus you see, these Holy Men did not think it enough, to offer up general Prayers to God, but having opportunity to be particular in their Requests, they were so. For themselves they especially begg'd such Blessings, as they stood in greatest need of. Of others they made particular mention in their Prayers; and they were careful particularly to pray against those Evils which more immediately threatned themselves or others. Let us not then satisfie our selves with asking Blessings of God in general only, but let us lay open our particular cases before him, which unless we do when we have opportunity, I cannot promise that God will take notice of them. And thus much shall suffice to show what we are particularly to pray for in our Closets. I come now

Thirdly, To show with what Dispositions of Mind our Prayers must be offered up to God, and they are these following.

First, Humility, This the very Notion of Prayer includes in it; for Prayer, as I told you before, is nothing else but an humble way of asking. He that asks for a thing without Humility, cannot properly be said to pray for

for it, but to demand it, not to beg it as a Favour, but to challenge it as a Debt. But this way of asking will very ill become us, who are needy and dependent Creatures, alwayes in want, and alwayes unable to supply our least wants; Us, who are poor helpless Creatures, sustained by the free Bounty and Mercy of God, and uncapable of obtaining any thing, but what his Goodness pleaseth to bestow upon us. If we expect that our Prayers should be heard, we must offer them up with an humble heart, deeply sensible of its own Poverty, and fully convinced of its own Inability to gratifie its desires, even in the least thing which they thirst after. If we come to God, with such a deep and humble Sense of our poor and mean Condition, then will our Prayers be acceptable unto him, then he himself has assured us that *he will look down from Heaven and hear us. For he forgetteth not the cry of the humble, but hears their desire.* But if we are puffed up in our proud hearts, and think that we have little or no need of God, it will be best for us then to forbear offering up any Prayers to him, for they will be an *abomination unto him*; *for he respecteth not the proud*, but will *scatter them in the Imagination of their hearts.*

Secondly,

Secondly, Attention, Prayer is the busi-nesse of the Soul, and he who reads the words of a Prayer, and lets not his heart go along with his words, can be no more properly said to pray, than he who is reading a Play or a Romance: And yet alass! we have too much reason to fear that this is all the praying that many people make. It is, God knows, too common a fault, to satisfie our selves with a *calling upon God with our lips*, though *our hearts are* never so *far from him*, and to think we have performed our Duty, when we have said our Prayers, whither we regarded one word we said or no. But this is all a sad Cheat upon our selves; and if we take not timely care to correct our mistake, we shall, when it is too late, find how miserably we have deceiv'd our selves. The heart is the Spring from whence proceed all our Desires and Petitions; our Words are onely outward Expressions of our hearts, and though to Men, who can guess at our Thoughts only by what we say they may make known our Requests, yet to God they signifie nothing, unless they are the Inward Language of the Soul, as well as the outward Language of the Lips.

Thirdly, We must pray with a sincere design to make a right use of those Blessings which

which we pray for. If we ask for Spiritual Bleſſings, onely to make a Show and Boaſting of them, to feed our own vain-Glory and Pride, and not to make uſe of them, as they were intended by God, for the Promotion of his Honour, and the Salvation of our Souls, we muſt not expect to obtain them. Or, if we ask for Temporal Bleſſings, with a deſign to ſerve ſome ill end by them, we muſt not think it hard, if God does not think fit to anſwer our Prayers. *Ye ask and receive not*, ſaith St. *James*, *Becauſe ye ask amiſs, that ye may conſume it upon your luſts.* God knows and regards the Intention of the Asker, and therefore we muſt take care, that our deſigns in asking may be always ſuch, as will be well pleaſing in his ſight. If not, we ſhall ask amiſs, and ſhall not receive.

Fourthly, We muſt pray with Faith, not doubting in the leaſt but that God can and will anſwer our Requeſts, if he thinks fit. St. *James* tells us, *ch.* 1. *ver.* 6. That we muſt *ask in faith, nothing wavering.* He who asks without Faith, prays without a right Senſe of God upon his Mind, and therefore cannot in reaſon hope to have his Prayers heard. Faith is the Foundation of Prayer, becauſe we believe that there is a God who can and will help us, therefore we

we pray unto him, but unless we are possest with such a Faith as this, there is no reason why we should pray. To the Prayer of Faith God has made a Promise that it shall be effectual, *The Prayer of Faith shall save the Sick.* But he who prayeth without Faith, calls either God's Power or Veracity in question, and is not like to receive any benefit from his Prayers.

Fifthly, We must pray with Fervency. A cold Lukewarm Prayer is just next to none at all, next to our not desiring a thing is our being indifferent whither we obtain it or no; and therefore if we show any Coldness or Indifference in our Prayers to God, he will be as cold and indifferent as we. He has been graciously pleas'd to promise that *a fervent Prayer shall avail much*; but he hates those who are *neither cold nor hot in their Prayers*: If we are thus *lukewarm*, he will *spue us out of his mouth*, and be so far from giving us what we ask, that he will severely punish us for this manner of asking.

Sixthly and *Lastly*, We must ask with an entire resignation to God's Will, firmly resolv'd that we will be contented and well-pleased, if he should not think fit to grant our Requests. Thus prayed the Blessed

ſed Jeſus, *Father, if it be poſſible let this cup paſs from me, nevertheleſs not as I will, but as thou wilt*; and thus alſo muſt we pray, We may ask for any of thoſe Bleſſings which I have before directed you to pray for, but ſtill with ſubmiſſion to the Divine Will. If God in his Infinite Wiſdom think fit to beſtow them upon us, we muſt moſt gladly receive them; but if he judgeth it beſt for us to be without them, we muſt be contented to be ſo. *Nevertheleſs not as I will, but as thou wilt*, muſt be the concluſion of all our Prayers. God knows infinitely better than we our ſelves, what is good for us, and therefore to his wiſe Providence we may ſafely, nay we are in all reaſon bound to commit our ſelves.

Theſe are thoſe Holy Diſpoſitions of Mind which God requires in all thoſe who ask any thing of him. I ſhould have added to theſe a firm reſolution of mind to leave our ſins, and become better; for without this all our Prayers will be ineffectual. But this I told you before, you muſt be ſure to put on in the Confeſſion of your ſins, before you preſume to ask any thing of God, and therefore I think it needleſs to ſay more of it here. Let us then proceed to conſider,

Fourthly,

Fourthly, In whose Name all our Prayers must be offered up. We, of our selves, are such vile and base Wretches, *That we are not worthy so much as to lift up our eyes towards Heaven.* For we know, as St. *John* saith, *ch. 9. ver. 31.* that *God heareth not Sinners*; and therefore we consider'd in our selves, are utterly unfit to pray to him: *But the Lamb of God which hath taken away the sins of the World*, hath made way for us to the *Throne of Grace*; he hath purged us from those sins, which before were as a thick Mist between us and Heaven; and by his most pretious Blood hath purchased and redeem'd our forfeited Priviledge of calling upon God. In his Name therefore must all our Suits and Requests be put up; and in his Name, and for his sake they shall be accepted. This he himself assures us, *John* 14. 13, 14. *Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name, that will I do. If ye ask any thing in my Name I will do it.* And again, *Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my Name, he will give it you.* When therefore thou hast any Request to offer up to God, be sure to remember that of thy self thou art unworthy to offer it up, and therefore let it be put up in the Name of Jesus Christ our Saviour, for the alone sake of whose Worthiness God will vouchsafe to hear our Petitions.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, I now come to that Question, Whither it be most adviseable to use Extemporary Prayers, or a Set Form, in the Closet. And here I cannot forbear owning that, as I am an utter Enemy to Extemporary Prayer in Publick, so I am also in private. For although we cannot urge all those Arguments against it in Private, which forbid it in Publick, yet I think there is enough to be said against the use of it, even here, to perswade every reasonable Man to forbear it. As,

First, Let us consider how few Men there are in the World, that are able to frame a Regular and Compleat Prayer, even when they studiously and deliberately set about it. And how then can we expect that we shall be able to do that without Study or Deliberation, and in a moment, which we cannot do even when we apply our selves with Care and Diligence to it? How Lame and Imperfect must the sudden Prayers of those Men be, whose most mature and well-digested Thoughts can produce nothing that is worthy the Sacred Name of Prayer, nothing which they themselves can think fit to offer up to God?

Secondly, How few are there, even of those Men, who with Study and Deliberation are

are able to compose a compleat Prayer, that can do it suddenly, and in an instant, without any previous Thought or Meditation. It would perhaps puzzle the most ready Man we have, to make such a Prayer on a sudden, as should not be deficient in any part of it. Or, supposing we could find some Men that are able to do this, yet sure they will not pretend that they can compose a Prayer, as good in every respect on the sudden, as they can when they have time for thinking allowed them. To make a general Prayer, which shall answer all our Wants and Occasions, and shall place every thing in that just Method, which its Order requires, must be a work of Time and Thought.

Since then there are some Men who are in no wise able to make a Prayer; and since those who are able, yet cannot do it on a sudden, at least cannot do it so well, as when they take time, and set about it with thoughtfulness; we cannot but conclude that it is necessary both for the one and the other to use a Set Form of Prayer; in which they may ask of God all those things they stand in need of, in such a decent Manner and orderly Method, as will be most acceptable to him.

Add to this, that a Set Form of Prayer is a great help to attention, whereas extemporary

porary Prayer perfectly perplexeth and di
ſtracteth the mind. How is it poſſible tha
Men ſhould ever attend to their Prayers a
they ſhould do, when their minds are ful
of the Thoughts of what they ſhall ſay nex
and their chief care is to ſay ſomething
though they do not well know what? Whe
things that ought to come firſt ſhall be pu
laſt, and the laſt firſt, and all ſhall be i
ſuch a ſad Confuſion, that we ſhall no
know when we have ſaid enough, or wha
it becometh us to ſay more. What a hur
ry, I ſay, muſt a Man's mind be in, in thi
caſe, and how uncapable will he be of pray
ing with that attention which God expect
from us. Beſides, every now and then, i
is probable the World will ſtep in and in
terrupt his thoughts, while they are i
this wild and Looſe Condition. But now
a Set Form of Prayer prevents all this
We need not here trouble our ſelves abou
what we ſhall ſay next, for we know afore
hand, that all things neceſſary are here ſe
down in a moſt decent and fitting order. We
have no other buſineſs but to fix our minds
upon what is ready prepared for us, and
how much eaſier this is than to invent al-
wayes New Prayers of our own, and to
offer them up with due attention I leave
to any Mans Judgment to determine who
has ever try'd both ways.

But

But here I am sensible I shall meet with two Objections against a Form of Prayer, which I think it will be no hard matter to Answer.

First, Some Men are against a Form of Prayer, because they say it is a stinting of the Spirit. They confess indeed, that of themselves, they are unable to frame any Prayer that is fit to be presented to God, but they think they have the Spirit of God, and that, they are sure, speaks the Language of Heaven. Set Forms therefore may lie still as useless; for the Spirit has no occasion for them. They know no reason, now they are by themselves, why they should be kept up to a Form, but the Spirit they think may have free utterance.

It is very much to be fear'd that many of those Men who talk of the Spirit at this rate, do not well understand what the Spirit means. They have got a Canting way of Talk from some Conceited Men, and like Mag-Pyes they chatter it by roat, but know not what they say. Had God Almighty been pleas'd to promise us, as he did the Apostles, that the *Holy Ghost should teach us what we should say*, When we enter'd into our Closets, I should be as much against Forms of Prayer of our own making, as I am now for them. But alas! We have no where

where any such Promise. The ordinary assistance of God's Spirit we shall never want, if we heartily seek it, and use it well when we have it. But I know no reason we have to expect such an extraordinary measure of the Spirit, as the Apostles had, without which we must not pretend to this Gift of Extemporary Prayer. I am very sure did these Men but examine their own sudden and unpremeditated Prayers, they would very often find them to be such miserable Stuff, that they would not dare to be so Prophane, as to think them the Language of the Holy Spirit.

A Second Objection comes from those Men who are against a Set Form of Prayer, because there is no Variety in it, they are unwilling to be so streightly ty'd up, and would fain have the Liberty of changing often, that they may not be wearied out with the dull Repetition of the same Prayers continually.

This is a very Poor and Weak Objection, and is an Argument rather of an humorsome and Nice, than of a truely Devout and Religious Spirit. However I shall endeavour to satisfie these Men as far as I can. Let such therefore know that there is no need they should be so closely confin'd to one Form in their Closets, as they must necessarily be in

in the Church. There are several excellent Books of Private Prayers which they may use, taking sometimes one, and sometimes another, as they themselves shall think fit: And this I think is variety enough. I only desire to lay a restraint where our Lord himself has laid one, and to command Men, as he did, that whenever they pray, they say his most excellent Prayer, *Our Father which art in Heaven*, &c. There are a great many good set Forms of Private Prayer of several Authors; if Men will keep to some of these, this is all I contend for, let them choose which of them they please, and change as often as they shall think fit. Only let them forbear this rambling and irreverent way of Praying *ex tempore*, and I am satisfied. And since there are already so many excellent Prayers for private use, I hope I shall be pardoned if I omit the inserting any of my own here. But if you will give me leave to recommend such as I most approve, I shall perswade you to use those at the end of the *Whole Duty of Man*, and those of the Right Reverend Dr. *Patrick* in his Book of Prayers.

Sixthly, As to the frequency of our Prayers, it is very hard, nay impossible, to give any certain universal Rule in this case,

because Mens Circumstances in this World are very unlike, some being Rich and Masters of their own Time, and so having a great deal of Time to spare; others Poor and continually engaged in such necessary Imployments, as take up almost all their Time. However in general I shall lay down these following Rules, which will reach Men of every state and condition.

1. That we should be as frequent in Prayer as we can, that is, as our necessary Worldly business, and the other Duties of Religion, will permit us to be. In Scripture we are commanded to *continue in Prayer*, to *Pray always and not to faint*, to *Pray without ceasing*, &c. Which Texts, although they are not to be understood in a Literal Sense, yet they certainly oblige us to a frequent performance of this Duty. They at least enjoyn us to spend that Time, which now we often fling away idlely, in the Worship of God. And there is scarce any Man, but those of the very lowest condition, for whom this Book is not designed, who has not some idle Time, some Time which is spent even in doing nothing, or what is worse, doing ill. The least therefore we can do, is to devote this Time to Gods Service. And if Men would generally observe this Rule, God would have a great deal more of their Time, than he now has.

2. No

2. No Man should ever pass a day without offering up his Sacrifice of Prayer twice to God, in the Morning and in the Evening. This at least our Reason seems to require of us. In the Morning our Bodies, as it were, are created anew, and stand in fresh need of Gods sustaining hand, and therefore it now becomes us to address our selves to him, as our Saviour directs us, for our *Daily-Bread*, that is, for such necessaries of Life as he has made us to stand in need of, by giving us a new day. At Night we lye down in our Beds, and know not whether it may not be in our Graves also. We are sure that we shall never awake more in this World, without Gods permission, and that if we awake in the other without his favour, we shall be eternally miserable. Now then it surely behoveth us to beg his gracious protection and merciful kindness, that so, whether we awake any more in this World, or sleep the sleep of Death, we may be sure of his favour, and then we shall not fail of being happy.

Add to this, that none of the Holy Men we read of in Scripture were less frequent in their Private Prayers than this. *Evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice*, saith Holy *David*. And of *Daniel* we read, *That he kneeled down in his chamber, and*

prayed three times a day. And in imitation of them, it would very well become us, who have time to spare, to pray three times a day likewise; but we must be sure never to fail of offering up our Private Prayers, every Morning and Evening.

3. Besides these constant seasons of Prayer, there are others which are purely accidental; as times of Affliction, Holy-days, Fasts, *&c. Call upon the Lord in the time of trouble*, saith *David.* When any Calamity or Affliction oppresseth thee, then you need not stay for your set time of Prayer, but run immediately to God for help, and beg his comfortable assistance. Holy days and Fasts are purposely design'd for the promotion of Piety and Devotion, and therefore on these days, besides our ordinary Devotions, we must have some Prayers which more immediately relate to the day, and we must spend more time in our Prayers, on such days, than we generally do on other days. There are days set apart more peculiarly for Gods Service, and as such, must be observed by us in our Closets.

If Men are careful to observe these Rules, we shall have no reason to complain that they do not perform this Duty of Prayer so frequently as they should do. If they bear a Conscientious regard to the first Rule, they

they cannot fail of Praying often; and if they omit this, and mind only the two last, they will still pray much oftener than now they do.

Seventhly, The Bodily Posture always to be used in Prayer, both Private and Publick, is Kneeling. Of this there can be no dispute, because we have an express Command of God for it. Thus *Psalm* 95. 6. *Let us kneel before the Lord our maker.* And agreeable to this Command was the practice of all Holy Men of old, nay and our Blessed Saviour himself, of whom we read *Luke* 22. 41. that when he had withdrawn himself from his Disciples, and went to pray privately to his Father, *He kneeled down and prayed.* If then our Saviours Example be worthy of our imitation, and God forbid any of us should be so prophane as to say it is not, Kneeling is that posture of Body which we must always use, when we offer up our most Private Prayers.

Thus have I briefly run over the several Heads, which I at first proposed to speak to. But I cannot conclude this Chapter, without inviting you to a frequent performance of this Duty, from a prospect of those many advantages which will flow from it. As,

1. If you Pray according to all the Rules before laid down, in all probability you will obtain what you Pray for. I say, in all probability, because it may possibly sometimes happen that God may deny you what you ask for, for some Wise and Good Reason unknown to you, even when you do not ask amiss. But generally speaking, you shall not be disappointed of your hope, but your Prayers shall be answered. But if you never pray at all, or pray not in this manner which God has prescribed, you have no reason to expect even the most trifling thing you want. To them that ask thus, God has promised that they shall have, but he has no where promised to bestow any thing on them, who do not pray to him.

2. If your Petitions are not answered, you will still have this to comfort you, that it is not for want of your performance of this Duty. He that is in want, and never prays as he should do to have his wants supplyed, may thank himself for them: But the good Man, who performs this Duty Conscientiously, whether his Prayers are answered or no, has this to satisfie his Mind with, that his misery does not proceed from his neglect of his Duty, but that God in his Wisdom thinks fit not to give him what he

he asks for, and therefore he can quietly and contentedly bear his want.

3. Whether our Prayers meet with their reward in this World or no, they will certainly not go unrewarded in the next. God has ingaged his Truth for this, and therefore we need not doubt of it. He has promised us, that if we thus *pray unto him in secret, he will reward us openly.* He will at the great day of retribution, however he may think fit to deal with us in this World, before the face of Men and Angels, and all that great Assembly which shall be then present, show us that he has heard our many pious Prayers, by rewarding us for them with an eternity of Happiness. Whatever disappointments therefore we may meet with, by not having our Prayers answered in this World, yet still we will not be discouraged. We know O Lord that thou art faithful which hast promised, and therefore though thou dost not reward our Prayers with Temporal Blessings, yet thou wilt give us that, if we ask as we ought to do, which we chiefly ask for, even Eternal Life and Glory.

CHAP. VI.

Of THANKSGIVING.

WE must always close up our Prayers with a Thanksgiving to God. For so he himself commands, *that we should give thanks for all things*, and with our *Prayers and Supplications* offer up our *Thanksgivings* also. *Phil.* 4. 6.

To give God Thanks is to acknowledge, with a Heart truly sensible of Gods great goodness towards us, the many Blessings and Mercies which he hath from time to time conferred upon us, to own that infinite mercy and kindness which he continually manifests towards us, and to bless and praise his Name for them. And though this is but a poor return for those many favours which we receive from God, yet he, out of his great love and condescension to us, has been graciously pleased to assure us that he will kindly accept it at our hands.

Our Thanksgiving must be twofold, General and Particular.

In

In General, we must thank God for all those Blessings which we enjoy in common with other Men; as our Creation after Gods own Image; the Redemption of the World by Christ; the offer of the assistance of Gods Holy Spirit to all such as earnestly desire, and heartily endeavour to obtain the Kingdom of God; the manifestation of Gods Will, and the Promises of Eternal Life and Glory to all those who embrace the Gospel, and live according to it, our continual preservation, and all the Temporal Blessings which we enjoy in this Life, and which others enjoy as well as we.

In Particular, we must give God Thanks for all those Blessings which he has in a particular manner bestowed upon us, whether they be Spiritual or Temporal.

First, Spiritual; as that he has caused us to be born of Christian Parents, by whom we were brought up in the true Religion, and so had not those Prejudices to conquer, before we could come to the knowledge of the Truth, which those poor Souls have who are ill Principled at first; that he has many times, by his Grace, kept us from yielding to the Temptations of Sin, and that when we have sinned, he has been so merciful as to afford us time to repent of our Sins, and to make our Peace with him.

In a word, we must thank him for all those particular means of improving our selves in Vertue and Goodness, which we have enjoyed beyond many other Men; whether by being born of more Vertuous Parents, more Religiously educated, living where we have had better Examples set before us, receiving a larger measure of Gods Grace, or being better disposed, by our Natural Tempers of Body, to Vertue and Religion than many other Men. For these and several such like Blessings, which it is impossible to reckon up, must we offer up our particular Thanks to God, who has so kindly bestowed them upon us.

Secondly, There are likewise many Temporal Blessings, which several of us enjoy, in a greater and more plentiful measure than many other of our fellow-creatures: As Riches, Honour, Reputation, Friends, Liberty, Peace, Health, Wit, Beauty, or the like. Many of us have had a great number of particular deliverances from some eminent danger, all of us some. So that we shall all meet with frequent occasions of blessing and magnifying the Name of God in a most particular manner, especially those of us, whom out of his own meer goodness and favour, he has placed in

in much better Worldly Circumstances, than many other of our Brethren.

But we must never fail, every Morning, to return our most hearty Thanks and Praise to God, for his care of us the Night before; for the refreshing Sleep which he gave us, his protection of us from all dangers, whether of Fire, Thieves, &c. but above all, for his permitting us once more to behold a new day, whereby we have some farther time for Repentance graciously allowed us.

At Night also you must be sure to call to mind all the Mercies of the fore-going Day. Consider with thy self what particular Sins God has kept you from committing, and what good he has enabled you to do; what success you have had in your Worldly Affairs, and what especial deliverances of any sort you have met with that Day. And for these Mercies you must offer up your most particular Thanks.

But it would be endless to reckon up all those Mercies for which we are obliged to bless and praise Gods Holy Name. *If I should count them*, as holy *David* saith, *they are more than the sands of the sea.* He who receives fewest Mercies from God, has yet received enough to imploy his whole Life in praises to him. *Bless the Lord therefore, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.*

Who,

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who redeemeth thy life from destruction, who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagles. Who executeth righteousness and judgment to all that are oppressed. Who is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. Who dealeth not with us after our iniquities, but pityeth us, even as a father pityeth his children, Bless the Lord therefore, O my soul, and all that is within me praise his holy name. This was the Language of the holy *David*, and this is that Language which God expects from all that love and honour him.

Now it will mightily help to quicken our gratitude towards God, and to enspirit and enlarge it, if, before we offer up our Thanks, we use our selves always seriously to reflect upon God, who is the Author and Fountain of all Mercies, and upon our selves, who are the unworthy receivers of them.

First, Let us consider that he who bestoweth these Blessings upon us, is no less a person than the great, eternal and ever-blessed God. So that if the greatness of the person who gives, increaseth the value of the gift, as it most certainly does, then those

those gifts which come from God must be infinitely more valuable than any other, and consequently deserve our loudest Thanks and Praise. That the great and high God should condescend so far as to take any notice of us, is such an exceeding great Mercy as we can never be thankful enough for. Upon this consideration *David* breaks forth, in the 113 *Psalm*, into these Expressions of Praise. *Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth, and for evermore. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lords name be praised. The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens. Who is like unto the Lord our God who dwelleth on high? Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven and earth. He raiseth up the poor, and lifteth up the needy out of the dunghil. That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.* *David* thought it such an instance of kindness and condescension in the great and mighty God, to look down upon this lower World, that he thought he could never praise him enough for it.

Besides, as God is infinitely above us, so also is he quite out of a capacity of receiving any advantage from us. He neither

stands

ſtands in need of, nor hopes for any returns of kindneſs from us, but out of his own free bounty and goodneſs makes his Sun to ſhine upon us. Men very often are kind to us more for their own ſakes than ours, deſigning by ſome ſmall favour to us, to purchaſe a greater from us to themſelves, and therefore ſuch favours as theſe do not much deſerve our Thanks. But God is utterly incapable of receiving any advantage from the favours which he beſtoweth upon Men. They all flow from pure love and goodneſs, and are diſpenſed with no other deſign, but to make the whole Creation happy. Oh! what infinite goodneſs is this? that the All-ſufficient God, who can receive no benefit from any of his Creatures, ſhould be continually ſending down Bleſſings upon them, and labouring to make them happy. How ſhall we enough admire the *length* and *breadth*, and *height* and *depth* of that Divine Love, which eagerly ſtrives, without any motive but its own Goodneſs, to make us Men partakers of Eternal Felicity? O my Soul, how canſt thou ever hope to be thankful enough for this unſpeakable Love? If thou ſhouldſt ſpend all thy days in one act of Praiſe and Thankſgiving, it would all come ſhort of what thou oweſt to thy God. Grudge him

him not then a small portion of thy time, but rejoyce when thou hast an opportunity of offering up thy Thanks to him, and greedily lay hold on it.

But *Secondly*, Our gratitude will still rise to a higher pitch, if we consider farther what we our selves are who receive these Blessings from God. But oh! I tremble to say what wretches we are. We are Sinners, base and vile Sinners, Rebels against God, Despisers of his Authority, Transgressors of his Commands, and careless of his Honour, the most contemptible of all Creatures, and most odious in the sight of God. And yet notwithstanding all this, he is graciously pleased to take care of us, and to preserve us by his Mercy and Goodness. Blessed God! how infinite art thou in thy Mercies, how kind even to those who most prophanely and impiously affront thee? *What is man, O Lord, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou so regardest him?* What indeed is he but a base, treacherous and ungrateful Creature? And yet thou usest him as if he were the most obedient, faithful, and best deserving Creature in the World. Should an injured Prince deal thus with his Rebellious Subjects, how would they admire his Mercy,

and

and praiſe his Love? Oh how ſhall we then be thankful enough for Gods Mercies to us, who have uſed him much worſe than ever any Subjects did their Prince, and yet continually receive greater Bleſſings from him than any Earthly Power can give. How ſhould our Mouths overflow with Thanks and Praiſe, when we conſider that our kind and gracious God, repays all our injuries with kindneſſes, all our affronts with Bleſſings. If this will not melt down our hard hearts into thankfulneſs, I know not what will. If the Conſiderations of Gods Infinite Condeſcenſion and Free Goodneſs, to us vile and miſerable wretches, who are continually abuſing and provoking him, will not kindle in Mens hearts a lively ſenſe of Gods Mercy towards them, and fill their mouths with Praiſes and Thankſgivings, I utterly deſpair of urging any thing elſe that will.

Were we ſure then that no benefit would redound to us from our Thankſgivings, yet it would be our unqueſtionable Duty, frequently to offer them up to God. But we want not encouragements to the performance of this Duty, for the benefits that it will procure for us will be very great. For,

Firſt,

First, This is the most acceptable Sacrifice we can offer up to God, and therefore will be a likely means of procuring his favour. *Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the most high, for this is much better pleasing in his sight than the flesh of bulls and the blood of goats. Whoso offereth me praise, glorifieth me saith God. When we sacrifice the sacrifices of Thanksgiving, and declare Gods work with rejoycing*, then is our offering such as he delights in.

Secondly, Thankfulness, for those Blessings which we have already receiv'd, will go a great way in procuring for us those which we stand in need of, and pray for. When God sees that Men have a right sense of his Goodness, and gratefully acknowledge his kindness towards them, he will think his Blessings well bestowed upon them, and be willing to continue them. But if he finds Men insensible of his Mercy, and unthankful for his benefits, it is very probable that he will withdraw *the light of his countenance* from them, and take no farther care of them. For he abhorreth ingratitude, and delights in the humble thankful Soul. If therefore thou desirest to obtain what thou askest for, be thankful for what thou hast received, that so when God shall

ſhall ſee that his Mercies are not loſt and thrown away upon thee, he may be ſtill incouraged to increaſe the number of them.

Thirdly, A conſtant performance of this Duty of Thankſgiving, will very much ſerve to confirm and enlarge our Love of God. When we ſhall frequently, twice a day at leaſt, call to mind the numerous inſtances of Gods mercy and loving kindneſs towards us, we ſhall ſoon find what St. *John* ſaith to be true, that *God is love*, and the more firmly we are perſwaded of Gods Love to us, the more ſtrong and vigorous will our Love be to him. For we cannot help loving him who, we ſtedfaſtly believe, has always loved us with Love unſpeakable, and always ſtudied our true good and intereſt. Nature it ſelf teaches us this Leſſon, that we ſhould love thoſe who love us, and therefore if we act agreeably to our Natures, our Love to God will moſt certainly flow from a true ſenſe of his Love to us. And this, a conſtant recollection of Gods Favours and Benefits, and a hearty Thankſgiving for them, will very ſtrongly imprint upon our minds,

Fourthly and *Laſtly*, A frequent and regular performance of this Duty, will be an

an excellent preparative for Heaven. There many of our other Duties will ceaſe; Reading will be there at an end, for we ſhall have no need of Inſtruction, but ſhall be perfect in Knowledge like God himſelf: There will be no need of Self-Examination, becauſe when we once come thither, we ſhall always keep in one right and conſtant way; nor will Confeſſion of Sins be needful there, where there is no ſuch thing as Sin; but Praiſe and Thankſgiving will be the work of Eternity. Our Tongues ſhall never ceaſe to tell of Gods Praiſe, and to ſhew forth all his loving-kindneſſes with gladneſs. There ſhall be no end of his Praiſe and our Thanks, but they ſhall be our happy and delightful employment for ever and ever. So that, if we would train up our ſelves for Heaven, we cannot take a better courſe, than frequently to accuſtom our ſelves to Praiſe, and thank God here on Earth, and ſo to begin that noble work here, which will be carried on by us hereafter, though in a much more perfect manner, to all Eternity. *Praiſe the Lord therefore, O my ſoul*, and offer up continual Sacrifices of Thankſgiving to him here on Earth, that thou mayſt be well tuned and fitted for that bleſt Imployment of the Saints in Heaven.

I have

I have nothing more to add on this Subject, but only to inform the pious Reader, that he will meet with excellent Forms of Thanksgiving, in that most admirable Book which I have directed him to for his Prayers, *The Whole Duty of Man.*

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Of MEDITATION.

WHAT ſpare Time you have left, after the performance of the foregoing Duties, I would adviſe you to imploy in Religious Meditation, that is, in thinking ſeriouſly upon ſomething which may tend to your ſpiritual good and edification.

Thus, for inſtance, I would have you every Morning conſider with your ſelf, how you are like to ſpend the following day, what company you ſhall be ingaged in, what buſineſs imployed about, what temptations to ſin you ſhall moſt probably meet with, and what opportunities of doing good may be in all likelyhood offered to you; and in a word, what evil you are moſt in danger of, and what good you are moſt likely to be capable of doing. And accordingly frame your deſigns for the regulation of your Life for that day; ſtudy with your ſelf how you may beſt avoid thoſe evils which are moſt likely to beſet you, and embrace thoſe opportunities of doing

doing good, which in all probability will be offered to you. Fore-arm your Mind againſt the aſſaults of the approaching evil, and prepare it with greedineſs to lay hold on the good.

After this, if your Time will give you leave, it will be uſeful for you to reflect upon the portion of Scripture that you have read that Morning, to conſider ſeriouſly with your ſelf, whither you rightly underſtood what you read; and if you did, what you found in it that might ſerve either for Inſtruction or Reproof to you, what incouragements to Vertue and diſſwaſives from Vice; and in ſhort, what that may be any way of advantage to you in relation to your Spiritual Concerns. Conſider alſo, how you have performed your other Duties that Morning, and wherein ſoever you find your ſelf to have been wanting, be ſure to remember your failing, that ſo you may correct it the next time.

At Night thou mayſt call to mind the particular Mercies of the Day paſt, and make theſe the ſubject of thy Meditation: Or elſe thou mayſt reflect upon the Night it ſelf, which coming now upon thee as the ſhadow of Death, will ſuggeſt to thee many uſeful Thoughts. Now likewiſe I would adviſe thee, as in the Morning, to reflect upon

upon what thou hast read, and the Duties thou hast been just performing.

At any other time of the Day also, when thou art at leisure, I would advise thee to enter into thy Closet, and imploy thy self in this Holy Exercise. Fix thy Thoughts stedfastly, at such a time, on some Religious Subject, especially upon such as will most immediately influence thy practice; such are *Death*, *Judgment*, *Heaven* and *Hell*, which if Men seriously thought on oftener than they do, they would lead much better Lives than they now do. And that no Man may be to seek for matter on any of these useful Subjects, I have taken care at the end of this Chapter, to subjoyn some short Meditations on each of them, which I am sure thou mayst use without any trouble, but I hope not without great advantage.

There are likewise many other Subjects proper for thy Meditation, such as the Birth, Passion, Resurrection and Ascension of our Saviour. When therefore any of those Days approach, which are purposely set apart by the Church to keep up in our Minds a constant sense and remembrance of these great Mercies of God towards us, I would advise thee to reflect seriously every Day, for a whole Week before, upon that Mercy which thou art suddenly to bless and

and praise God for in Publick. And so likewise on any other Holy-day or Saints-day, I would have thee imploy thy thoughts in Meditations suitable to the design of the Day, that so thou mayst be fitted for the Duties of the Day, and be well prepared for that Holy Exercise of Prayer and Praise which thou art then to perform in the *great Congregation*. And that you may not excuse your self by saying that you are unable to gather your Thoughts together, and fix them on any of these Subjects, I will save you this trouble, by telling you that you may find Meditations ready fram'd for these purposes, in a Book called *Reformed Devotions*.

In a word, any Religious Subject is proper for thy Meditation, but those most of all which will with greatest strength and vehemency stir thee up, and provoke thee to Piety and Vertue. If Men imploy their Thoughts in Holy Meditations, only to entertain their Minds with fine speculative Notions of God and Religion, they will be but little the better for them; but if they think in order to practice, and therefore chuse Practical Subjects to think upon, they will most certainly reap very great benefits from their constant Meditations. For,

First,

First, This will mightily tend to settle a firm sense of Religion in our Minds. When we shall every Day spend some of our Thoughts upon Religious Subjects, we may with Reason hope that Religion will never be quite out of our Minds. Such an habitual entertainment of her in our Thoughts, will make us familiarly acquainted with her, and tye us fast to her. It will make so deep an impression upon our Minds, as will not with ease be rased out. Nay, farther,

Secondly, This will most certainly make us deeply in love with Religion. The only Reason why Men do not admire her, and value her as they ought, is, because they never sufficiently contemplate her beauties. Would we but often view her in a true Light, we should find her Charms irresistible, and be proud of being admitted into her service.

Thirdly, An habitual practice of this Duty will teach us to delight in our own Company, and make us love to be alone. Men are very often forced to go into Company, purely for this Reason, because they know not how to imploy their Time, when they are alone. But if they would set

themſelves conſtantly to ſerious Thinking, and accuſtom themſelves at leaſt to dayly Meditation, they would ſoon learn how to ſpend their Time alone, and be ſo far from being uneaſie in their own Company, that they would delight in it more than in any other. And how much this would retrench the Wickedneſs of the Age, I dare leave to any Impartial Judge to determine.

Fourthly, and *Laſtly*, A conſtant performance of this Duty would work in us a mean and poor opinion of the things of this World. While Men imploy all their Thoughts upon this lower World, it is no wonder if they love nothing elſe; for while they know nothing better, they can love nothing more. But alas! if they would ſuffer themſelves to leave this World a little, and by the help of their Thoughts to look forward to the other, they would ſoon ſee the difference between them, and blame themſelves for not thinking ſooner. They would look with ſcorn and contempt upon this lower World, which has nothing in it that can ſatisfie a Reaſonable Nature, and for the future would learn to feaſt their Souls with more agreeable Banquets, with the delightful pleaſures of Religious Meditations, which alone carry a grateful reliſh with

with them, and truly please and satisfie a Reasonable Mind.

You therefore that have tryed the pleasures of Religious Meditations, I am sure can need no incouragement to be frequent in them. And as for you that have not tryed, I only beg of you to taste, and then leave off if you can.

DEATH.

Meditation 1.

IS it appointed for all Men once to dye? O let me wisely consider this, and learn how to live. Let me remember that the Night is coming, wherein no Man can work, and therefore let me do what I have to do to Day, whilst it is called to Day. Let me consider, amidst all my Worldly Injoyments, that there will certainly come a time when I shall be taken from them, whither I will or no; and considering this, let me not cleave so fast to them as if I was never to leave them. Let me always be mindful that I have here no abiding City, that I am a Stranger and a Pilgrim in this World, and that my Fathers House is in another Country; and therefore let me not

ſo firmly ſet my Affections upon the things of this World, as if they were to be my Lot and my Portion for ever, but let me uſe them only as conveniencies in my Journey, and be ready to part with them whenever it ſhall ſeem good to my Father to call me home. Let me often conſider that this poor Body of mine, upon which I ſpend now ſo much time and care, to trim and adorn it, ſhall one day become more noyſome than the vileſt carrion, that it ſhall be laid low in the Earth, and become a prey to the Worms; and then let me be proud of it if I can. Then ſhall all my Beauty be turned into Duſt, and my Bones into Rottenneſs. But my Soul ſhall ſtill live, Death has no power over that, it ſhall in ſpight of Death ſurvive the Body, and live to all Eternity. Bleſſed God! how fooliſh a Creature then am I, who ſpend all my Time in cultivating and adorning this fading and periſhing Body, and can afford none to my moſt precious and immortal Soul? I am aſhamed and confounded at the thoughts of this my great Folly, and I am reſolved for the future what I will do. I will ſhow how truly ſenſible I am of the worth of my Soul, by my care of it, and what a mean opinion I have of this ſhort-liv'd Body, by regarding it no farther than the good of my Soul requires. And, if I do

do this, I shall not be afraid to meet Death whenever it comes. Death has no sting but what Sin gives it; if therefore I am careful to pluck out this sting, I need not be afraid of it. If I am careful in my Life-time continually to watch my Soul, and to keep it pure and undefiled from Sin, then may I cry out with St. *Paul*, *O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory.* Then shall I smile, even in the Agonies of Death, and welcome the kind Messenger that comes to invite me home. But if I disarm not Death of this Sting, I shall indeed have Reason to fear him. It will be no wonder if I tremble at the sight of Death, when it shall be to me the Gate of Hell, and an entrance out of this World into a place of endless and unspeakable Torment. Be wise therefore O my Soul betimes; remember thy latter end and prepare for it. Remember that nothing but the thoughts of a well-spent Life can free thee from the fear, and arm thee against the assaults of Death, and resolve so to live that thou mayst not be afraid to dye. Resolve to be Righteous, and then thou shalt be so far from fearing Death, that thou shalt have joy and hope in it.

Meditation 2.

Is it most certain that I shall dye, but uncertain when? May I be called hence, for any thing I know to the contrary, the next Week, or the next Day, nay this very Day, or this very Moment, why then do I not live in constant expectation of Death? Why do I flatter my self with the hopes of long Life, because I am young, healthful, lusty and strong? Alas! vain Man, does not every days experience teach thee, that the young dye as well as the old, the healthful as well as the sickly, the lusty and strong as well as the weak and decrepit? Why then dost thou deceive thy self by building upon a sandy foundation. Art thou able to say thou wilt be alive to morrow? Alas! poor Soul, to morrow is out of thy power, and perhaps thou mayst never live to see it. Thou mayst in thy fancy extend thy Life as far as thou pleasest, thou mayst lay projects and designs for many Weeks and Months, nay for many Years to come; but notwithstanding this, thy Soul may be this Night required of thee. Thou art every Moment of thy Life in danger of Death, and canst not tell but that every gasp of Breath thou fetchest may be thy last. When to thy self and thy Fricnds

thou

thou seemest to be fartherst from it, then perhaps art thou indeed neerest to it. What a madness then is it not to be always prepared for it? Were we sure of living any certain time, we might then with some colour of Reason, defer our preparation for Death, till we saw it draw near us. But it is downright madness, for a Man to say, he will prepare for Death to morrow, when he knows not but it may come to day. Thou art afraid of missing any opportunity of improving thy Worldly Affairs, because thou art not sure that thou shalt ever meet with such another. O, why art thou not much more afraid of letting thy present opportunities of Repentance and Preparation for Death slip by thee, when thou thy self confessest that it is very hazardous and uncertain, whither thou shalt live to injoy the like again. How canst thou be so wise in the trifling concerns of this Life, and so very foolish in the much more important concerns of another? Happy is that Man, who because he knows not when his fatal hour shall come, whether at Even, or at Midnight, or at the Cock-crowing, or in the Morning, is continually watching and preparing for it. Yea, blessed I say is he who is thus constantly upon his guard, and is not afraid of a surprize. O let me live every Moment as if I was sure to dye the

next, and then I shall not fail both of living and dying in Peace.

Meditation 3.

'Tis true the time of my Death is very uncertain, but yet I know it cannot be far from me. Threescore and Ten Years is the longest period of Mans Life. One in a Thousand perhaps reacheth this, and One in Ten Thousand lives a little beyond it. Let this then comfort thee, O my Soul, under all the Troubles and Afflictions of this Life. They are but for a Moment, and though they lye hard upon us to Day, to Morrow we shall be free from them. Let not thy Courage therefore be cast down, neither be afraid, for thou mayst easily look to the end of thy Troubles. Let thy Patience hold out but a little longer, and thou shalt be sure in a little while to rest from thy labours. This consideration may make even the most uneasie state of Life supportable, since we know that it will not be long before our condition will be changed, and we shall be set at liberty from all those Afflictions which now surround us. The thoughts of this also should quicken my Diligence and Industry. For I know that I have a great deal of work to do, and I know also that all the time I have allotted me,

me, will be little enough to do it in. O let me not then lose one moment of this precious time. Let me not waste it in idle trifles and impertinencies, but let me imploy every Moment of it in doing that work which my Father sent me to do. If I do thus, my Time, how short soever, will be long enough; but if I squander it away in doing nothing, or nothing to the purpose, I shall find the want of it when it is too late.

JUDGMENT.

Meditation 1.

THough Death separates our Souls from our Bodies for a while, yet they shall one day meet again. An Angel shall sound a Trumpet, and command the Graves to give up their Dead; and then shall the Bodies of all that slept arise, and be again united to their proper Souls. Then shall the Son of Man come in the Clouds of Heaven with Power and great Glory, and all the Nations of the Earth shall be brought before him. Then will he require of every one of us an account of whatever we have

thought, said, or done in the Body, and give to every Man according to his works; to them who have patiently continued in well-doing, Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, and Eternal Life; but to them who have not obeyed the Truth, but have obeyed Unrighteousness, Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of them. Nothing will then escape the Eyes of our all-seeing Judge, but our most secret Thoughts, Words and Actions, shall be laid open before that great Assembly of Men and Angels, and weighed in the ballance of Impartial Justice. But, O my Soul, if our most Just Judge shall be exact to mark what we have done amiss, who will be able to stand before him? If with rigour and severity he shall try and examine us, who is there among us that will be found not guilty? But, O Blessed Jesus, we know that thou art merciful and willing to save to the uttermost. We rejoyce that thou, who wast our Saviour, wilt also be our Judge. We have long experienced thy loving kindness towards us, and are sure that we shall find Mercy in thy Judgment. Thou well knowest the infirmities of Humane Nature, and therefore we need not fear but thou wilt make gracious allowances for them. If through the whole course of our Lives we have sincerely

cerely endeavoured to obey all thy Commandments, if we have heartily bewailed our many failings and neglects, and have seriously and truly repented of them, we doubt not but that thou, our most kind and merciful Redeemer, wilt accept of this our sincere, though imperfect Obedience. Let it then, O my Soul, be thy constant care to endeavour in all things to approve thy self a Faithful Servant of thy Blessed Master, and thou wilt have no Reason to be afraid of him when he comes to be thy Judge; for in the midst of Judgment he will remember Mercy, and even in that dreadful and terrible day, will look with a chearful Countenance upon those who in all Godly Sincerity have had their Conversation in this World, and reward their Obedience with an eternal weight of Glory.

Meditation 2.

O! what a blessed and joyful day will this prove to those happy Souls, who shall then hear those comfortable words of our Saviour pronounced to them, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the World?* O! how will those happy Saints rejoyce, who having, like their Dear Lord, been despised and rejected of Men, shall at this

this great Day receive Honour and Glory from God himself, and be made to shine as the brightness of the Firmament, and as the Stars for ever and ever. Then shall God, before the Solemn Assembly of that Day, vindicate the Dispensations of his Providence, towards his Righteous Servants in this lower World, from the imputations of Severity and Injustice; by making it publickly and plainly appear, that although he suffered them to be evil intreated there for a while, and made no distinction there between them and the wicked, yet he always had them in remembrance, and only defer'd the manifestation of his special love and kindness for them, till this great and general Day of Retribution. Why then, O my Soul, dost thou suffer thy self to be discouraged, because thy Piety and Vertue are not immediately rewarded in this World? Why art thou ready to be weary of well-doing, because thou dost not see that God makes any certain distinction here, in the administration of his Temporal Blessings, between thee and the most profligate Wretch? Alas! my Soul, this World is not a proper place for distinction; but there is a time a coming O may it not come before thou art prepared for it, when there shall be a very visible distinction made between the Just and the Unjust,

just, when those steady Christians who have not fainted, shall most certainly reap, and, being separated from their false Brethren, shall be received up into Eternal Mansions of Glory.

Meditation 3.

Go on, my Soul, and if thou canst bear the dreadful sight, now take a view of those poor trembling Wretches, who having refused to own our Saviour for their Lord and Master, are sorry to find that, whether they will or no, he must be their Judge. O! what would they now give to be hid from his sight? What would they now give to have another Life, another Opportunity of preparing for Judgment? But alas! it is too late, their time of tryal is past and gone, and there remains nothing but a fearful looking for of Fiery Indignation. Alas! unhappy Wretches! How do they start and look pale at the sight of their Judge? They need no Tryal, for their Countenances condemn them. They too well know that Blessed Jesus, whom they have so often scorned and trampled under foot, and now too late they find that he is come, according to his word, to execute Judgment upon his Enemies. Behold! they fall down trembling at his Feet, and im-

importunately beg forgiveneſs. But O unhappy Negligence! O ill tim'd Repentance! 'Tis now in vain to ſue for Pardon, when they themſelves cannot but own the Juſtice of that dreadful Sentence, which their Judge muſt now pronounce upon them, *Depart from me ye curſed, into everlaſting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Alas! poor Souls, how are they able to bear this deadly Sentence? Gladly would they dye under it, but that they cannot, They are now baniſhed for ever from the injoyment of God and Happineſs, and chained down to Eternal Miſery. O that Men would often entertain themſelves with this ſad but uſeful Thought, that they would often draw this Melancholly ſcene in their Minds, and try whither it would not effectually damp all their Irreligious Mirth and Jollity. Let them ſeriouſly ask themſelves how they will be able to bear the ſight of an abuſed and angry Redeemer, and then let them abuſe and provoke him if they dare. But whatever other Men may do, do not thou fail my Soul, frequently to reflect upon this great and terrible day of the Lord, terrible indeed to thoſe, who by adding iniquity to iniquity, heap up wrath againſt the day of wrath. Always remember that all thy Thoughts, Words and Actions, muſt be proved and exa-

examined at this great Day, and therefore take care that they be such as will bear this severe Tryal. Never dare to be merry or cheerful, till thou hast settled the accounts of thy Soul, least Eternal Sorrow overtake thee unawares, and shut out every glimpse of Joy or Comfort from approaching to thee.

HEAVEN.

Meditation 1.

COuld we ascend up into the Third Heaven, and view there those Glorious Mansions which our Gracious God hath prepared for all such as continue his Faithful Servants unto the end; how should we be transported with that ravishing and blissful sight? How earnestly and impatiently should we desire to be dissolved and to be received up into that New *Jerusalem*? How eagerly and couragiously should we contend for this great and noble Prize? O let our Faith supply our want of sight; let us firmly believe what God hath told us concerning his Kingdom, and then the Joys of Heaven will be as present to our Minds,

as

as if we really saw them. Let us believe him (and surely it is no unreasonable thing stedfastly to believe him, who cannot possibly deceive us) and we shall soon be possessed with a true sense of the greatness of that Happiness, which is laid up for the Saints in Heaven. The very lowest and meanest thing that the Scriptures say of it, is, that it is incomparably beyond all the happiness of this Life. The Pleasures of this World are oftentimes great in expectation, but always very poor in the enjoyment; but those of the other World are infinitely greater in the enjoyment, than they were in the expectation. Here our Pleasures are all imbittered with an ungrateful mixture of Pain and Trouble; there they shall be pure and unmixt, free from any base alloy, or bitter ingredients. Here a frequent repetition of our Pleasures makes them dull and nauseous to us; but there we shall continually repeat them with the same vigorous delight, with which we first enjoyed them, and they shall always be fresh and new to us. Here our Pleasures are unconstant and uncertain, always upon the wing and ready to leave us; there they shall be fixed and unchangeable, and we shall have a secure possession of them. So vastly will the Pleasures of Heaven surpass, in all respects, these our Earthly ones, that when

when we come to taste the one, we shall grudge even the very name of Pleasure to the other. Oh Blessed God! what egregious folly then are those Men guilty of, who for the deceitful Pleasures of Sin, part with their title to those substantial Joys, which will be the certain reward of Vertue and Obedience. Cheat not thou thy self thus, O my Soul, but with an Eye of Faith look forward into the Heavenly Paradise, and from the Contemplations of the solid happiness of that glorious place, learn to despise this poor counterfeit happiness, which the vain World makes her boasts of.

Meditation 2.

Great and Glorious are the things which are spoken of thee, thou City of God. Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive how richly thou art furnished with all things necessary to make the happiness of thine Inhabitants compleat and perfect. But this in general we know, that as the happiness which thy blessed Inhabitants enjoy is vastly beyond that which we call happiness in this World, so is it likewise in it self exceeding great; great indeed, since it is too big for us to frame any notion or conception

ception of; infinitely great, because it shall be like the happiness of him, who is indeed happiness it self. For we know and are assured, that when we shall ascend up into Heaven, we shall become like God himself, like him, as in other things, so in his Happiness and Glory. Did we therefore know no more of our future Happiness than this, it were enough to satisfie us in our inquiries concerning it, for what can we desire more than to be like God, the most perfectly happy Being, in Happiness? But if we desire to be more particularly still informed concerning the ingredients that help to make up this mighty Happiness, the Scriptures will discover some of them to us. They promise us an infinite inlargement of our Knowledge, and that our Wills shall be unchangeably bent towards good, and our Affections chained to the most amiable objects; that we shall know God, even as he knows us, chearfully and readily perform his Will, and love him, and be beloved by him, with the most intense and ardent Affection; that we shall be admitted into the Society of Angels and Just Men made perfect, and enjoy their endearing Conversation and Friendship, and partake with them in their blessed imployments and in that fulness of Joy, which is continually in Gods presence. O Glorious State, how wilt thou

thou feast our Understandings, Wills and Affections, by setting before them constantly such objects, as they shall contemplate, love and admire with inexpressible pleasure. Were this the only Happiness of Heaven, it would be an abundant recompence for all that we can do or suffer in this World. But alas! we know not yet what our Happiness will be, and even this which we pretend to know, we know but in part, very darkly and obscurely. This I know, O may I often think on it, that the Rewards of Heaven are infinitely beyond every thing which I can now conceive or imagine, and that the Happiness which the Blessed Souls there enjoy, being like the Happiness which God himself injoys, must be infinitely great and infinitely perfect.

Meditation 3.

As the Happiness of Heaven shall be infinitely great, so shall it be eternally durable; it will not only be an exceeding but an eternal weight of Glory. It would mightily pall and damp the Happiness of the Saints, as great as it is, to see to an end of it; to see, though at never so great a distance, a time coming, when they should be divested of all their Glory, and reduced

to

ception of; infinitely great, becauſe it ſhall be like the happineſs of him, who is indeed happineſs it ſelf. For we know and are aſſured, that when we ſhall aſcend up into Heaven, we ſhall become like God himſelf, like him, as in other things, ſo in his Happineſs and Glory. Did we therefore know no more of our future Happineſs than this, it were enough to ſatisfie us in our inquiries concerning it, for what can we deſire more than to be like God, the moſt perfectly happy Being, in Happineſs? But if we deſire to be more particularly ſtill informed concerning the ingredients that help to make up this mighty Happineſs, the Scriptures will diſcover ſome of them to us. They promiſe us an infinite inlargement of our Knowledge, and that our Wills ſhall be unchangeably bent towards good, and our Affections chained to the moſt amiable objects; that we ſhall know God, even as he knows us, chearfully and readily perform his Will, and love him, and be beloved by him, with the moſt intenſe and ardent Affection; that we ſhall be admitted into the Society of Angels and Juſt Men made perfect, and enjoy their endearing Converſation and Friendſhip, and partake with them in their bleſſed imployments and in that fulneſs of Joy, which is continually in Gods preſence. O Glorious State, how wilt thou

thou feast our Understandings, Wills and Affections, by setting before them constantly such objects, as they shall contemplate, love and admire with inexpressible pleasure. Were this the only Happiness of Heaven, it would be an abundant recompence for all that we can do or suffer in this World. But alas! we know not yet what our Happiness will be, and even this which we pretend to know, we know but in part, very darkly and obscurely. This I know, O may I often think on it, that the Rewards of Heaven are infinitely beyond every thing which I can now conceive or imagine, and that the Happiness which the Blessed Souls there enjoy, being like the Happiness which God himself injoys, must be infinitely great and infinitely perfect.

Meditation 3.

As the Happiness of Heaven shall be infinitely great, so shall it be eternally durable; it will not only be an exceeding but an eternal weight of Glory. It would mightily pall and damp the Happiness of the Saints, as great as it is, to see to an end of it; to see, though at never so great a distance, a time coming, when they should be divested of all their Glory, and reduced

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to their Primitive Poverty. But the Inhabitants of Heaven have no fear of this, their Pleasures, as they are without measure, so are they without end; they are possessed of Everlasting Life and Glory, and their Happiness can no more cease, than God can cease to be, for he hath promised that it shall be eternal, and therefore it must last as long as God is true, which will be for ever and ever. Look up then, O my Soul, and survey the Promised Land, stedfastly behold its Beauty, and consider its duration, and then tell me what thou wouldst give to be possessed of it: Alas! my Soul, all that thou canst give will not purchase it, but thy Blessed Saviour and Redeemer hath already purchased it for thee, and given thee a just claim and title to it. He has only required a sincere Obedience to all his Commands, as a condition of Everlasting Life; perform this, and Heaven is thine own. Be sure but to follow thy Blessed Master, and he will lead thee into Heaven. This, this is the only way to get thither; we must be holy before we can be happy, and perform our Lords Will, before we can be received up into his Joy. And oh! what is there that I would not do or suffer, to obtain Heaven? How many difficulties do I constantly encounter and surmount, purely for the sake

ſake of the paltry Pleaſures of this Life? and can I then think any thing difficult, when Heaven is to be my Reward, if I fight a good fight, and obtain the victory. Oh no! were I to run through flames to Heaven it would be an eaſie paſſage; I ſhould never faint under the fiery Tryal, while I kept my Eyes conſtantly fixed on that Joy, which my Gracious God hath ſet before me. But thanks be to God, this is ſeldom made the way to Heaven; the way thither is generally ſmooth and pleaſant enough, and though ſometimes we meet with Thorns and Brambles in it, yet great part of it is as pleaſant as we can wiſh it. But, be it as it will, if thou wouldſt obtain the end, it is abſolutely neceſſary thou ſhouldſt uſe the means. If thou deſireſt to be like God in his Happineſs, it is requiſite thou ſhouldſt firſt endeavour to be like him in his Holineſs; be pure as he is pure, and he has promiſed thou ſhalt be happy as he is happy. Now then mayſt thou make ſure of Heaven, if thou thinkeſt it worth obtaining, now mayſt thou obtain the Crown, if thou thinkeſt it worth thy while to ſtrive for it. Rouze, rouze my Soul, and inſtantly ſet about thy work, I am ſo tranſported with the proſpect of the Heavenly *Canaan*, and raviſhed with the hopes of poſſeſſing it, that I reſolve to fight my way

to

to it through every thing that oppoſeth my Religious Progreſs, and to preſs forward, even through the moſt rigid and ſevere Afflictions, to thoſe Glorious Manſions of Eternal Happineſs and Pleaſure.

HELL.

Meditation 1.

HOW admirably, O Bleſſed Jeſu, is thy Religion fitted to work both on our Hopes and Fears. Great are its Promiſes, and great its Threatnings, on the one ſide a Heaven to invite us, on the other a Hell to fright us into obedience. O let us fear here that we may not for ever ſmart hereafter. Conſider, O my Soul, before it is too late, what Torments are prepared for the diſobedient in the next World, and knowing the Terrors of the Lord do not dare to diſobey. Think often on that dreadful Sentence, *Depart from me ye curſed into Everlaſting Fire*; think duely on it, and then provoke God if thou dar'ſt. Doſt thou know what it is to depart from God? It is nothing leſs than to depart from all that's good, and all that's happy, to be thruſt

thruſt away from the Bleſſed Regions of Everlaſting Life and Glory, and to be baniſhed from all the Pleaſures and Enjoyments of Paradiſe, Alas! my Soul, how canſt thou bear the thoughts of this? Yet this will certainly be thy lot, if thou art not careful by a timely Repentance to prevent it. Too ſadly alas! do the Damned Spirits know the meaning of this mournful word, *Depart*? O! how do thoſe wretched Souls fret and vex, and grieve and rage at the thoughts of this dreadful word. When they look up to Heaven and conſider what they might have been, O! how does it torment them to think what they now are? Unhappy Souls! they feel by woful experience, what the loſs of Heaven is; they ſee Heaven indeed, but the ſight of it ſerves only to increaſe their pain, and continually to reproach their folly. O! how do they laſh themſelves for this their folly, and curſe thoſe gay deluſions which cheated them of their Eternal Happineſs? Envy, Deſpair, and Madneſs rack their Souls, they thirſt for that which they muſt never enjoy, and pierce and wound themſelves with raging Grief. Reaſon it ſelf which gives us here relief, ſerves only to increaſe and raiſe their torments. Be wiſe then, O my Soul, in time, and take care not to loſe that Happineſs, the loſs of which will make

make a Hell for thee in the other World. Weigh well the Joys of Earth and Heaven in the just ballance of Reason, and so chuse now, that thou mayst not for ever lament and curse thy choice hereafter. Hearken to thy Conscience in this World, whilst it gives thee friendly advice, that so it may not be thy tormentor in the next. For this is that ever gnawing Worm which continually preys upon the Damned Souls, and chaseth away all Rest and Quiet from them.

Meditation 2.

Sure it is Hell enough to be doom'd continually to lament the loss of Heaven; we shall need no other Punishment to make us miserable. And yet alas! this is not half of Hell. Were this all, the Damned Spirits would think their Punishment light, when compared with that which they are now chained to. *Depart from me*, is but one branch of their Sentence; that which follows is, if possible, still more dismal, *into Everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* O dreadful and intolerable Sentence! Who can dwell with everlasting burnings? We are not able to endure here the scorching of the Fire for a moment, and how then shall we be able to endure the more

more exquisite and piercing Fire of Hell, for ever and ever? But yet this will be the portion of every wicked and ungodly Wretch in the next World. And to add to their misery, (though indeed it is already large enough, and needs no addition) they shall be forced continually to hear the groans and cryes, and to see the sad and miserable condition of their fellow sufferers. O sad and mournful scene! a place full of darkness and melancholly horrour, full of howling and weeping and gnashing of teeth. O unspeakable Torments! infinite in your extent and eternal in your duration, too great to be born, and yet not to be fled from. Were there ever to be an end put to the sufferings of the Damned, the prospect of this, though at never so great a distance, would help to alleviate their Misery; but alas! their pains will never wear away, but will be alike sharp and quick to all Eternity. They shall feel more in one Moment, than they endured on Earth all the time of their Lives, and this infinitely great pain and torture shall last for ever and ever. Their Fire shall be so far from being ever quenched, that it shall never abate, and their Bodies shall be always prey'd upon by the flames, and yet shall never be consumed. In vain shall they sigh

and groan, and weep and wail, they are miserable beyond all relief, and beyond all expression. They shall seek Death, but shall not find it; they shall desire to dye, but Death shall fly from them. Eternal Life shall be a curse to them, since they shall only live in unspeakable misery, only live to wish in vain for Death. Gods Wrath is upon them, his Vengeance has overtaken them, and will continue heavy upon them to all Eternity.

Meditation 3.

Wouldst thou know, my Soul, how to avoid this place of Torment? There is but one way. Learn truly to fear him, who can destroy both Body and Soul in Hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him, and then thou needest not fear Hell it self. 'Tis true indeed, the way which leads to Hell is broad and spacious, and at first sight seems to be a pleasant road, and therefore it is necessary that thou shouldst always remember that the end thereof is bitterness. Many there are, alas! too many, that walk in it, and will perswade thee to bear them company; they will use enticing words, and flatter thee with their double tongues; but believe them not, for destruction

ction is in their paths, and the way of peace they have not known. The only certain way to escape Gods Wrath, is to avoid those Sins for which it comes upon the Children of Disobedience. When ever therefore thou art tempted to any thing that is sinful, be sure to avoid it, for it will lead thee down directly to Hell. Only be careful to keep thy Innocency, and then thou mayst safely triumph over Hell it self. But if thou committest Sin, and obeyest the Devil, then art thou the Servant of the Devil, and shalt be partner with him in his misery. Every particular breach of our Duty carrieth us nearer and nearer to this dreadful place of Torment, and every Sin unrepented of casts us down towards it. Consider this all ye that forget God, least he snatch ye away, and there be none to deliver ye. Consider this, I say, and show your selves Men; Men whose Reason teaches them to fly from danger, and to seek for peace. Remember that the pleasures of Sin are not to be purchased, without the loss of thy Heavenly Happiness; nay more, that those short and fading pleasures will end in an eternity of misery; think seriously and frequently of Hell, of the greatness of its Torments, and the perpetuity of them; think as often on the

pleasures of Sin, their emptiness and vanity, and the shortness of their continuance; and then I can safely leave thee to choose for thy self, either Obedience and Heaven, or Sin and Hell.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Of Private Humiliation.

THere is one Duty ſtill behind, which I have too much reaſon to fear is but little thought of, even among the better ſort of Chriſtians; and this is *private Humiliation*, or the ſetting apart ſome time to bewail in ſecret both our own particular Sins, and the general ſinfulneſs of the whole World. This, I confeſs, is but a melancholly employment, but yet ſo neceſſary an one, that without it we can never hope to enjoy any true peace or cheerfulneſs. For this is that *Godly ſorrow which bringeth forth Joy*, and unleſs we can thus mourn, we ſhall never poſſeſs any ſolid or laſting comfort.

Our Holy Mother the Church has taken peculiar care to provide for the performance of this Duty in Publick, having ordered ſeveral days in the Year to be ſet apart for this purpoſe. Such are all her days of Faſting and Abſtinence, both ordinary and extraordinary, which were all deſigned by her to be ſo many days of

Mourning and *Humiliation*, *Mortification* and *Repentance*.

And certainly it will well become us her Children, in imitation of her holy Example, to set apart some time for the discharge of this Duty in private; that so there may be an uniformity and agreement in our publick and private behaviour, and we may act like Christians, not only when we appear in the *great Congregation*, but also when we withdraw into our closest and severest retirements. We must not think it enough to comply with the Commands of the Church, in observing her publick days of Humiliation, but we must be the same in our Closets that we are in our Churches, possessed with the same sense of our own and other Mens Sins, and humbled under the same weighty load of sorrow, or else it is very much to be feared our Religion is all dissembled. Nay, indeed the Closet seems to be the most proper place for the performance of this Duty, because we have not those restraints upon us there, which we have in publick. There our Minds will be at perfect liberty to reflect seriously on those grievous Sins, for which we humble our selves, and we may freely disburthen our selves of all our Sorrows, and give our Tears their full vent. Do not therefore content thy self with a dis-

charge

charge of this Duty in Publick only, but let the Closet have some of thy pious sighs and groans, which seems to be a place peculiarly fitted for this melancholly and solitary imployment.

Thus did the Holy Men of old. *David* did not think it enough to lament his own and other Mens Sins, in the publick place of Gods Worship, but he retired into his inmost Chamber, and there *watered his couch with his tears*, and truly mourned and grieved for those *who kept not Gods Law*. *Jeremiah* sought for the most secret and retired places, and there poured forth his Soul in Tears and *Lamentations*, and mourned before his God, for the crying Sins of his Nation. And Holy *Daniel* thought it not too much to spend *three whole Weeks* in Private Mourning and Humiliation for his own and the Peoples Sins.

Do not thou therefore, dear Christian, think it too much to spend a part of one Day in every Week in this Holy Imployment; but constantly on every *Fryday*, the day on which thy Blessed Saviour suffered for thy Sins, make it thy business to humble thy self before thy God in Private, and heartily and sincerely to bewail thy own Sins, and the Sins of all Mankind, and earnestly beg pardon for them. If thou dost thus, thou wilt observe the day, as the

Church designed it should be observed; for certainly no Imployment can be so proper on that day, on which *the Lord of Life and Glory was made a Sacrifice for Sin*, as this of Mourning and Humiliation, of detesting and abjuring Sin, and of showing our hatred of it. And that thou mayst not be at a loss, for want of a Form of Devotion, which thou mayst constantly use upon this occasion, I will take care to furnish thee with one at the end of this Chapter. In the mean while I shall endeavour to stir you up to this holy practice, by representing to you two very great advantages that you will obtain by it.

First, By humbling your self before God, and bewailing your own and other Mens Sins, you may probably prevent some of those terrible Judgments, which God seems to have decreed against your self and others. If any thing can stop the Arm of Divine Justice, it must be the powerful Humiliation and Sorrow of them who truly mourn for Sin. Towards such as these, God has always showed himself very compassionate; and has not only spared them themselves, but very often others also for their sakes. Their Cryes and Intercessions pierce the Heavens, and have an easie access to his presence, and their Sighs and Tears melt him

him down into pity and compassion. He cannot strike, while there are *Ten* such Persons in a City, but for the sake of those Ten, all the rest shall escape. This has been the ordinary, I will not say the constant, way of his proceeding, and therefore we may have great hopes, if we sincerely and passionately mourn for Sin, that for our sakes God will be Merciful to our whole Nation; or at least, that if his Wrath doth descend upon the Children of Disobedience, that he *will hear our* sorrowful *cry and will help us.*

Secondly, *They that mourn* thus Religiously, *shall* most certainly *be comforted. They that* thus *sow in tears shall* undoubtedly *reap in joy.* Though they do not immediately feel the happy effects of this their pious Humiliation, yet at the last they shall most surely find our Lords words true, *They shall be comforted.* They shall then indeed be comforted, when our Blessed and most Just Judge, who keeps all their *Tears* in his *Bottle*, shall command them to enter into the *joy of their Lord.* Then shall their *sorrow be turned into joy*, and because they once wept, when Tears were necessary, they shall now never weep more, *but all tears shall be wiped from their eyes.* And who then would not be contented to mourn

here, that he may be sure never to mourn hereafter? Who would not willingly imploy every Moment of his Life in such a Holy and Religious Mourning, as will purchase for him an Eternity of Joy? Grant, O Merciful God, I beseech thee, that I may be such a true Mourner in this *vale of Tears* and Misery, that I may have a Title to thy Promise of Everlasting Comfort, and that when I shall be taken off of the Melancholly Stage of this World, I may be received into those Mansions of Joy and Pleasure, where Grief and Sorrow never enter.

An Office of Humiliation, to be used by private Christians in their Closets, every Fryday *in the Year.*

AS soon as you rise in the Morning, apply your self to your ordinary course of Devotions; only instead of the Heads of Self-Examination set down in this Book for your daily use, make use of those in The Whole Duty of Man, *which I have before advised, upon extraordinary occasions. And be sure to do this with great care and thoughtfulness,*

fulness, that so thou mayst bring thy self to a right sense of the greatness and multitude of those thy Sins, which thou intendest to mourn for. After you have regularly and decently performed your ordinary Devotions, you may give over and refresh your self for a while, and then return to your Closet again. Where, when you have composed your self, I would have you begin these your solemn Devotions, with this useful Reflection upon your own state and condition.

A Soliloquy.

O My Soul, thou hast weighed thy self in the balance of the Sanctuary, and thou art found very light. Light indeed are all thy good works, but thy Sins are very heavy; like a weighty burthen they are too heavy for thee to bear. Oh! whither will such a dreadful weight sink thee? It will pull thee down into the lowermost Hell, if thou dost not take care to free thy self from it; if thou art not truly sorrowful for it, and firmly resolved to shake it off. There is scarce any one Commandment of thy God which thou hast not broken, which thou hast not transgressed time after time, notwithstanding all the kind motions

motions of the Blessed Spirit, and the checks of thy own faithful Conscience to the contrary. Thou hast run with delight into Sin, and foolishly and impudently gloried in thy disobedience. The number of thy Sins is like the number of the Sands of the Sea, and the greatness of them is beyond all expression. Oh! let thy Tears be as hard to be numbered as thy Sins, and let thy Sorrow for them infinitely transcend the Delight that thou tookest in committing them. Let thine Eye become a Fountain of true penitent Tears, that so being first washed in thine own Tears, thou mayst be fit to be washed from thy Sins in the Blood of thy dear Saviour. *Let thine Eyes trickle down, and cease not, without any intermission, till the Lord look down and behold from Heaven.* And let thy Heart be filled with such a sorrowful and pious Contrition, as thou knowest thy God will not despise. This, O my Soul, is the sure way to obtain true Peace and Comfort, this is that Repentance which thou shalt never Repent of.

Immediately after this, fall down upon thy Knees, and make the following humble Confession of thy Sins to God.

A Con-

A Confession.

ALmighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all Men; I acknowledge and bewail my manifold Sins and Wickedness, which I from time to time most grievously have committed, by thought, word and deed, against thy Divine Majesty, most justly provoking thy Wrath and Indignation against me. I do earnestly Repent, and am heartily sorry for these my misdoings; the remembrance of them is grievous unto me, the burden of them is intolerable. Have Mercy upon me, have Mercy upon me, most Merciful Father; for thy Son our Lord Jesus Christs sake, forgive me all that is past, and grant that I may ever hereafter serve and please thee in newness of Life, to the Honour and Glory of thy Name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Prayer

A Prayer for Forgiveneſs of Sins.

LOok down, O Merciful Father, look down from Heaven, and behold a poor miſerable Wretch, oppreſſed with the burthen of his Sins, and overwhelmed with Sorrow. Look upon me with an Eye of Pity and Compaſſion, who am heartily grieved for my Sins, and firmly reſolved to forſake them. Send me Comfort, O Bleſſed Redeemer from thy holy place, and viſit me with the Light of thy Countenance. Receive, O Gracious Father, receive a true and ſincere Penitent, who with ſighs and tears cryes aloud for Mercy. Thy property, O Lord, is alwayes to have Mercy, and to forgive, O let thy Merciful Ears be open to my Prayers, and let them receive that Bleſſed Anſwer from thee; *Son, be of good cheer, thy Sins are forgiven thee.* Grant this, O Merciful God, for thy Son Jeſus Chriſts ſake.

A Prayer for Grace to amend our Lives.

O Holy Lord God, who by thy Grace workeſt in us both to will and to do according to thy good pleaſure, give me ſuch a meaſure of thy Grace, I moſt humbly beſeech thee, as may enable me to amend my Life for the time to come, and to be obedient to all thy Wiſe and Juſt Commands. It is the earneſt deſire of my Soul to pleaſe thee, and I know that there is no way to pleaſe thee, but by keeping thy Commandments. O let me ever have them written in my Heart, that they may be alwayes preſent with me, and that I may continually meditate upon them. Grant that I may from this Hour bid adieu to all Ungodlineſs and Worldly Luſts, and that I may dedicate my ſelf entirely to thee, to ſerve thee in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs. Thou, O Lord, out of thy infinite Kindneſs and Mercy, haſt graciouſly been pleaſed to give me a ſight and ſenſe of my Sins; O let me ever hate and abhor them, deteſt and forſake them, and cleave entirely unto thee whom my Soul longeth for. Let me no more return with the Dog to his

his vomit, but ſo eſtabliſh me with thy Grace, that no Temptation of the World, the Devil, or my own Fleſh, may be ever able to draw me to offend thee, but that being made free from Sin, and becoming thy Servant, I may have my Fruit unto Holineſs, and in the end Everlaſting Life, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.

When you have fervently and affectionately put up theſe Prayers to God, in the next place I would adviſe you to read over this following portion of the Pſalms, with great ſerioufneſs and attention.

1 *HAve mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am weak; O Lord heal me for my bones are vexed.*

2 *My ſoul alſo is ſore troubled, but Lord, how long wilt thou puniſh me?*

3 *I am weary of my groaning, every night waſh I my bed, and water my couch with my tears, my beauty is gone for very trouble.*

4 *For thine arrows ſtick faſt in me, O Lord, and thy hand preſſeth me ſore.*

5 *There is no health in my fleſh becauſe of thy diſpleaſure, neither is there any reſt in my bones by reaſon of my ſin.*

6 *For my wickedneſſes are gone over my head, and are like a ſore burthen too heavy for me to bear.*

7 *I*

7 *I am brought into so great trouble, that I go mourning all the day long.*

8 *I am feeble and sore smitten, I have roared for the very disquietness of my heart.*

9 *Lord, thou knowest all my desire, and my groaning is not hid from thee.*

10 *For I truly am set in the plague, and my heaviness is ever in my sight.*

11 *But I will confess my wickedness, and be sorry for my sin.*

12 *Wherefore turn thee unto me, O Lord, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and in misery.*

13 *The sorrows of my heart are enlarged, O bring thou me out of my troubles.*

14 *Look upon mine adversity and forgive me all my sins.*

15 *Mine iniquities have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up; they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart hath failed me.*

16 *Yea even from my youth up, thy terrours have I suffered with a troubled mind.*

17 *For thy wrathful displeasure goeth over me, and the fear of thee hath undone me.*

18 *My heart is smitten down and withered like grass, so that I forget to eat my bread.*

19 *For the voice of my groaning my bones will scarce cleave to my flesh.*

20 *Yea I have eaten ashes as it were bread, and mingled my drink with weeping.*

21 *And that because of thine indignation and wrath, for thou hast taken me up and cast me down.*

Immediately after this Psalm, read some Portion of Scripture proper for this occasion: In the Old Testament read the Story of Ahab, *who, notwithstanding his great wickedness, upon a sincere humiliation, found favour with God,* 1 Kin. 22. *In the New Testament, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, who, though he had lived riotously and wickedly, yet because he humbled himself for his Sin, and earnestly begg'd forgiveness of his Father, he was kindly received by him, and had all his past faults blotted out,* Luke 15. *These Lessons read with due attention, will administer great comfort to thee in thy sorrow, and fill thee with joyful hopes of obtaining a gracious Pardon of all thy Sins, from thy most merciful and tender Father.*

After thou hast made an end of Reading, conclude thy Morning Devotions with this following Thanksgiving and Prayer.

A Thanks-

A Thanksgiving.

O Bleſſed Lord, who, out of thy great love and kindneſs towards me a vile and miſerable Sinner, haſt been graciouſly pleaſed to bring me to a ſight of my Sins, and to excite in me Holy Deſires of leaving them; I deſire to return thee my moſt humble and unfeigned Thanks for this thy unſpeakable Mercy. O! how miſerable ſhould I have been, if thou hadſt given me over, as juſtly thou mighteſt, to an hardneſs of Heart, and contempt of thy Word and Commandment. But, O Lord, thou haſt not dealt thus with thy Servant, but haſt opened his Eyes to ſee the things that belong to his Peace. Thou thoughteſt it not enough to redeem me once from Death, by the precious Blood of thy moſt dear Son, but thou haſt many times plucked me from the Jaws of Hell, when I was flying from that Happineſs which my Bleſſed Saviour purchaſed for me. O! how often have I been engaged in the paths of ruine and deſtruction, how often has thy Holy Spirit led me out of them, and ſhowed me the way to Everlaſting Bliſs and Glory? Even now, O Lord, thou kindly calleſt and inviteſt

inviteſt me to thy Kingdom, even now thou exhorteſt me to leave my burthen, and to enter into thy Reſt. What ſhall I render unto thee, O Lord, for this thine ineſtimable benefit? For this and all other thy Mercies I will praiſe thy Name for ever and ever, and endeavour conſtantly to pleaſe thee, by a ſincere and univerſal obedience to all thy Commands. O Lord, enable me to make good theſe my Vows, for the ſake of thy Son, our Saviour, Jeſus Chriſt. *Amen.*

A Prayer.

O Holy Lord, who art ready to embrace all true Penitents that come unto thee, who delighteſt not in the Death of a Sinner, but hadſt rather that he ſhould turn from his Wickedneſs and live, hear me, and help me, I moſt earneſtly beſeech thee. Strengthen and confirm in me thoſe Holy Reſolutions, which thou haſt put into my Heart, and grant that I may perſevere in them unto my Lives end. Let not my Tears ever be wip'd from my Eyes, or my Sorrow baniſhed from my Heart, till I have made my Peace with thee, and am again become one of thy true Children.

Bleſs

Bless and prosper the good work which thou hast begun in me, that so I may proceed from Sorrow to Repentance, and that being truly penitent I may obtain thy pardon and forgiveness. Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my Sin, that so I may be holy and pure in thy sight, and duely qualified for the participation of that Eternal Happiness, which thou hast promised to all those who truly love and serve thee. And this I ask and beg of thee, in the name, and for the sake of thy dear Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The end of the Mornings Devotions.

Devotions for the Afternoon.

AS thy Morning was spent in bewailing thy own Sins, let thy Afternoon be spent in lamenting the general sinfulness of Mankind; that so the whole World may fare the better for thy Tears and thy Prayers. When therefore thou hast settled thy self in thy Closet, begin thy Devotions with this serious Soliloquy.

A Soli-

A Soliloquy.

WHen I reflect upon the general corruption of Mankind, their averseness from all good, and their readiness to all evil, their open and prophane contempt of God and Religion, and their impudent encouraging of all manner of Sin and Wickedness, I am astonished and confounded; astonished with wonder at the patience and long-suffering of God, which has thus long bore with us; and confounded with fear and horrour at the prospect of those many dreadful Judgments which seem to hang over us, and are just ready to fall upon us. For if God should deal with us after our Sins, and reward us after our Iniquities, we should soon become like *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, *a Lake of Fire and Brimstone.* Our Iniquities have ascended up into Heaven, and alas! what can they bring down thence but wrath and destruction? They cry aloud to God for vengeance, and almost call his Justice into question, because he is so merciful as to bear with us. But though God has thus long forbore us, we must not be so presumptuous, as to think he will still suffer us. Though he is slow to anger, yet

yet his wrath will most certainly descend at last upon the Children of Disobedience, and though it has been long coming, it will be very grievous and heavy when it comes. Let it be thy business then, O my Soul, to endeavour to keep off the fierce anger of the Lord, as far as thou art able; let thy Sighs and Tears continually come before him, and plead for Mercy, and let thy Prayers continually ascend up into his presence, and with importunate cryes beg of him that he *would spare his People*, and not bring his *Heritage to confusion*. It may be, that he will pity thy Cry, and will hear thee; it may be that thy Sighs and Tears may melt him into Compassion, and that for thy sake it may go well for a time with the evil-doers. Cry aloud then, O my Soul, and try if by thy fervent Prayers, thou canst not prevail.

After this, read the following Psalm.

1 *IT grieveth me when I see the transgressours, because they keep not thy law.*

2 *My heart sheweth me the wickedness of the ungodly, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.*

3 *For he flattereth himself in his own sight, until his abominable sin be found out.*

4 *The*

4 *The words of his mouth are unrighteous and full of deceit, he hath left off to behave himself wisely and to do good.*

5 *He imagineth mischief upon his bed, and hath set himself in no good way; neither doth he abhor any thing that is evil.*

6 *The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that would understand and seek after God.*

7 *But they are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become abominable, there is none that doth good, no not one.*

8 *Destruction and unhappiness is in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known, there is no fear of God before their eyes.*

9 *But health is far from the ungodly, because, O Lord, they regard not thy statutes.*

10 *Wherefore, when they were sick I put on sackcloth, and humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer shall turn into mine own bosom.*

11 *I behaved my self as though it had been my friend or my brother, I went heavily as one that mourneth for his mother.*

12 *For I am horribly afraid, O Lord God, for the ungodly that forsake thy law.*

13 *Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because men keep not thy commandments.*

After

After this Psalm, read the Eighteenth Chapter of Genesis, *where God promiseth* Abraham, *that he would spare* Sodom *if he could find but ten righteous persons in it. And let a due reflection upon this, help to enlarge thy pious Sorrow, and to encrease thy Christian concern for the general sinfulness of the World; that so, for thy sake, and the sake of some other truly devout Souls, God may be merciful to all Mankind. And, to make sure of his Mercy and Pity, add these following Prayers to thy tears, and try if, by this holy violence, thou canst not extort Compassion from him.*

A CONFESSION.

O Most Holy Lord God, who art terrible in thy Judgments towards the Children of Disobedience, who for the Sins of Mankind didst once drown the whole World, and didst also rain Fire and Brimstone upon *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, for the sinfulness of them that dwelt therein; I acknowledge and confess, in behalf of my self and all the rest of Mankind, that we have justly deserved thy severest Judgments, for we have all gone astray and dealt wickedly, there is

not one of us that doth Good, no not one. We have openly contemn'd and ridicul'd Vertue and Religion, and in their room have set up and encourag'd all manner of Vice and Wickedness. We have dis-honoured thy Name, defiled thy House, prophaned thy Worship, and slighted thy Commandments. Nay, O Lord, We have been so hardy, that we have been insensible under thy punishments, and that which thou in Mercy designed to reform and amend us, has served onely to make us more obstinate and rebellious against thee. We have made our selves Slaves to the World, the Flesh and the Devil, and have engag'd our selves in a War against Heaven, and have fought against our own Happiness. And now, O Lord, what can we expect from thee but Judgment and fiery Indignation, which is indeed the due reward of our Sins? We must confess that we are ripe for destruction, and ought every moment to expect to have the World set on fire about us. But, O Lord, thou art a merciful God, to thee belong Mercies and Forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against thee, and have not obeyed thy voice, by walking in those Laws which thou hast set before us. Deal not with us therefore, O Merciful Lord, after

our

our sins, neither reward us after our iniquities, but let thy Anger and thy Wrath be turned away from us, and bring us not to confusion, Let the Prayers and Tears of those few pious Souls, who mourn in secret for the sins of Mankind, stop thy avenging hand, and prevail with thee to allow a sinful World a little more time for repentance. O let not our obstinacy tire out thy patience, but do thou mollifie our stony hearts, do thou smite these hard rocks, that true penitent Tears may flow from them. Bring us to a sense of our Sins, and a dread of thy Judgments, that so we may not dare to provoke the any more, but may humble our selves before thee, in a most sincere and sorrowful contrition of heart, that thou being pleased therewith, may'st repent thee of the evil, which thou ha'st said thou wouldst do unto us, and do it not. O Lord hear, O Lord forgive, O Lord hearken and do, not according to our merits, but thy mercies; for the sake of him, who hath purchased and redeemed us with his own blood, even Jesus Christ our Lord, *Amen.*

Then use these Ejaculations taken out of the Whole Duty of Man.

O Lord, of whom shall we seek for succour but of thee, who for our Sins art justly displeased? Yet O Lord God most Holy, O Lord most Mighty, O Holy and most merciful Saviour, deliliver us not into the bitter pains of Eternal Death.

Father, we have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and are not worthy to be called thy Children; yet, O Lord do not thou cast off the bowels and compassions of a Father, but even as a Father pitieth his own Children, so be thou merciful unto us.

O God, we confess that we have deface'd that Image of thine, which thou did'st imprint upon our Souls; yet, O thou faithful Creator, have pity on thy Creatures.

O Jesu, we have by many and greivous Sins crucified thee afresh, yet thou, who prayed'st for thy Persecutors, interceed for us also, and suffer not, O blessed Redeemer, our Souls (which are the price of thy blood, to perish Everlastingly.)

O Spirit of Grace, we have by many horrid Impieties done despight to thee;

thee; yet, O blessed comforter, though we have often grieved thee; be thou pleased to succour and releive us, and to give us Grace to repent of our Sins, that we may obtain the end of our Hopes, even the Salvation of our Souls.

In thee, O Lord, is all our Hope and Trust, O cast not out our Souls, but let the Light of thy countenance shine favourably upon us, and visit us with thy Salvation.

An INTERCESSION.

O Merciful Lord God, who didst send thy Son into the World to redeem the World, and art not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance, and the knowledge of the Truth, have mercy upon all *Jews*, *Turks*, Infidels and Hereticks. Be favourable, O Blessed Lord, to thine antient People the *Jews*, take from them all hardness of heart, and open their eyes that they may see though late, the Lord of Life and Glory, and with an unfeigned submission turn unto him, and cheerfully obey his commandments. Let the Light of thy Gospel shine forth, even unto the darkest corners of the Earth, that so the whole world

may come to the saving knowledge of thy truth, and become one Sheep-fold under the great Shepherd of our Souls Christ Jesus. And grant, O Lord, that all those, who, by thy infinite grace and favour, have heard of the name of thy Dear Son, and are admited into the Communion of of his Church, may endeavour to adorn the Religion they Profess, by the Holiness and integrity of their Lives, by a pure, meek and humble Conversation. Bless all degrees of Men in the whole World from the highest to the lowest, but more especially those whom thou hast entrusted with the Sovereign power, of governing thy People. Grant that they may wisely consider, that the Sword is put into their hands, for the maintenance of virtue, and the discouragement of wickedness and vice, and may manage it accordingly; that so both Christian and Heathen Governours may endeavour as far as lieth in them, to promote virtue and goodness, and to put down all vice and wickedness. And to all of inferiour ranks and Stations give thy Heavenly Grace, that they may all be mindful of their several Duties, and carefully and Honestly perform them. Make us all sensible of the great danger we have brought our selves into by our sins, and enable us, by the help of thy

thy Holy Spirit to dis-entangle our selves from them, and to turn unto thee with a stedfast Faith and unfeigned Repentance. Avert those Judgments from us, which we have all just reason to fear, especially we who are called by the name of thy Dear Son, because we sin against much clearer light, more powerful convictions, and are endowed with a greater strength by far to resist Temptations, than the unbelieving world. Give Light, O Lord, to all that want it, and enable all to live up to that Light which they have already, that so the Light which is in them, may not be turned into darkness. Finally, O Lord, be Merciful to all Men, make us all such as thou would'st have us, and then we shall be such as we our selves desire to be. Turn thou us, O Good Lord, and so shall we be turned. Be favourable, O Lord, be favourable to us: for thou art a merciful God, Long-suffering and of great Pity. Thou spareſt when we deserve punishment and in thy Wrath thinkeſt upon Mercy. Spare thy people, good Lord spare them. O Lord, for thy mercy is great, and after the multitude of thy mercies look upon us, through the merits and mediation of thy blessed Son Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Prayer.

O Gracious God who, upon the Interceſſion of thy Holy Servant *Moſes*, didſt turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of the evil which thou thought'ſt to do unto thy People; hear the Prayers and the Supplications, which thy Servant hath now offer'd up unto thee, in behalf of the whole World; why doth thy wrath wax hot againſt us, why art thou ſo diſpleaſed at us? O let not thine anger burn for ever, but encline thine ears unto my Prayers and hear them, and anſwer them in loving-kindneſs, mercy and forbearance. Hear, O Lord, and anſwer, not for my ſake, but for the ſake of him, who hath loved us and given himſelf for us, even thy moſt dearly beloved Son, Jeſus Chriſt our Lord; who hath taught us when we pray to ſay.

Our Father, which art in Heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in Earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our treſpaſſes, As we forgive them that treſpaſs againſt us. And lead us not into temptation: but deliver

us

us from evil. For thine is the Kingdom, The Power and the Glory, For ever and ever. *Amen.*

Here ends thy Afternoons Devotions, but let not thy pious sorrow end here; that must be more durable, it must be well rooted and settled in thee, being a gracious Disposition of mind, which the blessed Jesus requires of all his followers. At night let thy Devotions be the same, as they used to be. You may use any of these Prayers, at any time, when you please, with your other Devotions.

The Conclusion.

I have now briefly run over the several Duties of the Closet, and instructed you, as well as I am able, how you may best perform them. I have nothing more to do, but earnestly to perswade you to be constant in the Practise of them, and, since you are made to know what your Duties are, not to be barren or unfruitful in that Knowledge.

And methinks it should be no hard task to prevail upon Christians to be careful in the performance of those Duties, which most of all show them to be Christians, which are so truly pleasant in themselves, and will be so very beneficial to us. Methinks, I say these Duties should speak for themselves, and need no advocate to plead for them. But alas! too sadly do we find that the charms of Religion have not that effect upon Men, which may very justly be expected from them, and that all which we can say in her behalf is no more than is necessary, in this loose and degenerate age. I shall therefore endeavour to draw Men to an habitual Practise of these Duties by these three very powerful Motives.

First,

First, By our constant performance of these Duties, we shall be best able to know, whither we are indeed Christians or no, whither we only put on an outward form of godliness, or are inwardly full of the power of it.

Secondly, We can no way entertain and feast our minds better, than by a frequent performance of these Duties.

Thirdly, They carry with them a very great and noble reward, and will abundantly recompense all the care we take in a due discharge of them, both in this world, and that which is to come.

First, I say, by our constant performance of these Duties, we shall be best able to know, whither we are indeed Christians or no, whither we only put on an outward form of godliness, or are inwardly full of the power of it. It is so much the Temporal Interest of every Man, to appear Virtuous and Religious in the World, that it is very much to be feared, that a great number of those Men who talk much of Religion, and make a great show of it, yet are rotten at bottom, and use it only as a Cloak for their Knavery. Thus did the

Pharisees

Pharisees of old, they prayed in the publick streets, nay, and made long prayers too, but it was only for this Reason, that they might with less suspition devour Widows houses. And therefore a man, whose Religion never goes out of sight, but is always acted before Men, may very justly Question whether he is truly Religious as he ought to be, and acts upon the noble Principles of Christianity; whether he be sincere in what he doth, and doth not Serve God for the sake of *Mammon*. For we may flatter our selves, as the *Pharisees* did, and call our selves righteous, when yet a corrupt principle of worldly Interest may be at the bottom of all our Righteousness, and Spoil all. We may indeed outwardly observe most of the Duties of Christianity, and yet be as far from being true Christians, as *Turks*, or Infidels.

But if we would surely know, whether we are sincere Christians or not, we must try our selves, when we are out of the sight of the world, and when no body is by to take notice of and applaud us for what we do. If in our Closets, where, (let our behaviour be what it will, the world is never the wiser for it) if here, I say we always choose to spend our time in conversing with God, and in the Holy

Exercises

Exercises of an inflamed *D*evotion, we may with very good reason hope that our Religion is not dissembled, but that it flows from an inward sense of the many Obligations we lie under to be Religious. For no other reason can be given why Men should perform the *D*uties of Religion, but these two, Either First, because they design by an appearance of virtue to gain a reputation amongst Men, Or, Secondly, because they are truly sensible of the great reasonableness and necessity of pleasing God, and walking according to his Commandments. The First can have no place in the Closet, from which the world is shut out, and therefore cannot possibly tell whether we are good or bad there, and consequently can pass no Judgment upon us. But the Second will oblige us equally both in publick and private, and is the only Reason that can be given for Closet-Religion. If therefore thy retired hours are constantly well spent, in Holy, and Religious Exercises, this is a very great proof of thy sincerity, and may reasonably give thee this assurance, that not only the Form of godliness sits upon thee, but also that the power of it dwells in thee.

II. We can no way entertain and feast our minds better, than by a frequent per-

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formance of these Duties. Our Souls, which are the Images of God, when they are left to themselves, and have no restraint upon them, naturally thirst after God, and desire to converse with him. They perfectly well know him to be the greatest good, and therefore they value him and delight in him above all things; so that the true happiness of our Souls consists in their Communion with God, and consequently the more closely they are united to him, the greater must their happiness and pleasure needs be! 'Tis true indeed we cannot see God face to face in this world; our present enjoyment of him and and conversation with him are very imperfect, in comparison of what they shall be in the other world. But yet, as imperfect as they are, they infinitely transcend all the other pleasures of life. There is nothing else which the Soul can relish; all other joys are flat and insipid; but the pleasure of conversing with God she tasts, with inexpressible transport and delight.

And what place can be so proper for the Soul to meet her beloved in, as the Closet, where there shall be nothing to disturb or interrupt their Heavenly conversation, no earthly Objects to divide and distract the thoughts, but the world shall be quite shut out, and God shall be all

all in all? Here may she enjoy him, as fully as possibly she can in this life, and converse with him as closely, as the vast distance between Heaven and Earth will let her. She cannot have a full sight of him there; that beatifick vision is reserv'd for those, who shall be thought meet to be made partakers of the happiness with the Saints in Heaven; but she may now see him through a glass darkly, and converse with him in the Holy exercises of the Closet, such as reading his word, speaking to him in prayer and praise, and silently meditating on him and his infinite perfections, which are the only ways we have of conversing with God in this world.

I. reading his word; and what can be more pleasant to a rational mind, than to view that portraiture which God has given us of himself in his Holy Book; where we have the clearest manifestation of the Divine nature, that this world affords us? How delightful must it needs be to turn over that *Book of God*, and continually to make new discoveries there of the Divine beauties and perfections; sometimes to observe his Justice, at other times his mercy, then to admire his wisdom, and to praise him for his goodness? What can be more entertaining than to follow him

him there through all the numerous turnings and windings of his Providence, and to behold and admire all the exquisite art and contrivance of the great Governour of the world? But above all, how strangly will it please us to acquaint our selves with the will of God, which is here plainly, so far as it concerns us, made known to us? This is indeed a great and noble employment for the mind, to study the will of it's Creator, and to reflect upon the reasonableness and excellency of those *Laws*, by which the all-wise God governs the Universe. Such great *delight* had Holy *David* in the study of these *Laws*, that they were his *meditation all the day*, nay, and in the Night season also did *he meditate in them. He desired them more than Gold, yea than much fine* Gold, *and they were sweeter unto him than honey and the honey-comb.* And indeed it is impossible it should be otherwise with any pious Soul, since in these sacred Books she may find all that she can desire and wish for. Doth she thirst after knowledge, let her come hither and quench her thirst at these Sacred Fountains, from which all valuable knowledge flows. Would she gladly settle her affections upon some truly lovely and desirable Objects? O let her draw near, and look stedfastly upon her God, who exposeth as much of himself to view in this Holy Book,

as

as Human sight can bear, and then let her love any thing else, if she can. Here she will find him, who alone is lovely, nay, and what will still more delight and please her, here will she find a sure way to the Eternal injoyment of him, whom she so much loves; here will she be instructed how to behave her self so, that her God, whom she thirsts after, may delight in her, and take her up from beholding his *hinder parts*, to that glorious place, where she shall see him face to face, and have a full and secure enjoyment of him for ever and ever. O! Let her then come with joy unspeakable to the study of these *Divine* Books, in which she shall find all that is worth knowing or loving, all that she delights in, or hopes for, all that can make her easie here, and eternally happy hereafter.

II. Another way of conversing with God is by prayer and praise. First by prayer, by which the Soul makes known her wants to God and sueth to him for a supply of them. And what an ease must this be to our Souls, when oppressed with any trouble, or reduced to any straits or exigencies, to have the Liberty of communicating their case to God, and of begging help of him who they are sure, both can and will help them. This is indeed a very great and valuable privilege, and such

ſuch an one, as we ſhall every day have occaſion to make uſe of. Let afflictions, croſſes, diſappointments, or troubles come when they will, the pious Soul knows where ſhe may get protection from them, nay where ſhe may obtain power to repel them, and to make them fly before her. She can call, and her God will hear and anſwer, *ſhe can make her cry in an acceptable time, and ſhall be delivered out of all her troubles.* O! moſt comfortable and delightful employment! eaſie in performance, and great in reward, pleaſant even in doing, and exceeding beneficial when done; how muſt every Soul rejoyce that conſiders this? how gladly ought we always to haſten to this Holy exerciſe, which even in our worſt and moſt deſperate caſe will ſtill afford us unſpeakable comfort and relief.

Again, as to praiſe, what more proper or agreeable employment can be found out for the Soul, than the praiſe of him, who made, preſerv'd, redeem'd her, and is continually doing her good. The delight which every grateful Soul takes in requiting it's Benefactours, as far as it is able, is inexpreſſible. Thanks and praiſe is all that we can return God for his manifold and great favours, theſe therefore we ſhould always be offering up. *We ſhould praiſe his name from day to day, nay all the*

day

day long should we have pleasure therein. We should talk of his loving kindness in the great congregation, and in our Chambers also should our Songs be always of his mercy; we should joyn with the Holy Angels above, in their Hymns of praise, who cease not day and night to praise and Magnifie God, but count it their happiness that they are allowed to sing of his mercies, whose praise fills Heaven and Earth.

III. The last way of conversing with God here on Earth is by Meditation. And what refreshment will it be to our weary Souls, when quite spent and tir'd out with the business of this life, to ascend up to their Native Heaven, and there to feast themselves with all the pleasures they are capable of; to give their Understandings, wills, and affections their full scope, to know all that is worth knowing, to choose every thing that deserves their choice, and to love that which alone is lovely. Had not the mind the power of releasing it self thus from Earth sometimes, this world would be but a very dull and melancholy place, having nothing in it which can, in any Sense, satisfie our Souls, and make them truly easie and happy. O! Let us then often retire to our Closets, and give our Souls the pleasure of conversing thus with God, let us be frequent in reading his word

word, in praying to him and praising him, and in sending up our Souls to him in Religious Meditation. Let us not deny our poor Souls, the only happiness which this world affords them, the only food which can nourish them, but let them take as much of Heaven here, as they can, and feed at present upon the crumbs that fall down from their Lords Table, till at last they shall be admitted to sit down at his Table with him in his Kingdom.

But if pleasure be not strong enough alone to draw you to your Closet, yet sure when profit is joyn'd to it you cannot possibly resist, and therefore I will proceed in the last place, to show that the benefits which we shall receive from the frequent performance of our Closet Duties, will be unspeakably great.

I. When we have accustomed our selves to delight in our Closets, we shall never have any time lye upon our hands but shall know where to employ all our vacant hours. And this, as it will be a great ease to us here, so will it turn to great account hereafter. It will at present free us from all those troubles and inconveniences which idleness and want of knowing how to spend our time continually bring upon us, which are very many and very great, and it will mightily shorten our sad Account, and

and take away more then one Third part from the Catalogue of our sins. For I am sure I may safely say that, as time is generally spent, above one Third part of the sins which we commit is owing to idleness. When therefore all our Idle hours are turned into hours of *D*evotion, how much better will our Accounts look, how much easier shall we our selves be here, and how much happier hereafter.

II. The constant performance of these Duties is a very likely way to settle such a firm sense of Religion upon our minds as shall influence the whole course of our Lives. For what we do in our Closets, is done with a great deal more thoughtfulness, and makes much deeper Impressions upon us, than what we do in publick; so that we may with good reason hope that the Religion of our Closets will show forth it's fruit in all the other parts of our Lives and Conversations; and that it will bring an habitual seriousness upon us, and fix God so firmly in our thoughts, that it will be no easie matter to dispossess him.

III. This is the best way we can take to procure Gods blessing upon us here, in our worldly concerns. For when he shall look

look down from Heaven, and behold a sincere and undissembling Soul, who does not only make a profession of him in publick for present advantage, but Worships him in the most retired places where no eye can see her but his own, I say when he shall behold so much true and sincere Religion in any of us, it is ten thousand to one but that he will bless us in all we undertake. This, without doubt will make us very dear unto him, for he loves Sincerity and Truth, and in all probability will put us under his particular care and protection. But,

IIII. And Lastly, whether it obtains any blessings for us in this World or no, it will without fail make sure of those of another World. At the great day of retribution, when men shall be rewarded according to their deeds, then will our Father, who hath seen us in secret, rewards us openly enough. Openly indeed, in the presence of the whole World, in the presence of his Holy Angels, and all the Saints in Heaven. Then every moment that was Religiously spent in our Closets shall turn to our advantage, and help to encrease our Happiness. Many shall we see in that day, who though they made great shews of Religion in the World, yet really had

had none at all, who frequented the Churches to be seen of men, but never approv'd themselves to God in their Closets. These poor unhappy wretches, having sadly deceived their own Souls, shall now find the sad consequence of this deceit; they are now unmask'd, and their form of godliness will profit them no more, but they shall be given up to the Devil, whose Children indeed they have always been. But the sincere Christian, whose Religion has not been acted, but has been hearty and sincere, and the same in the Closet that it appear'd in the Church, shall dwell for ever with the God of truth and sincerity, and continually taste of those joys, and drink of those Rivers of pleasure, which are at Gods right hand for evermore.

If then either the prospect of present pleasure and profit, or the hopes of future happiness have any power over us, they will oblige us to a constant performance of the Duties of the Closet, which is attended with certain pleasure and great profit here, and will be rewarded with eternal happiness hereafter. And on the contrary, the neglect of them, being the highest contempt of God that can be, as showing that we have indeed no true Religion at all, but that it is all false and counterfeit, and that we have no regard at all

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to the commands of God, who has strictly enjoyned us thus to wait upon him in private, will have it's due reward in Hell, amongst the wicked and ungodly. Let us consider this, and be wise.

FINIS.

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